

A Public Relations Approach to Co-Creational Image Management in Professional Sport

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Abstract

This dissertation investigated the influence of legitimacy and social media on organizational image management (IM) in North American professional sport. The author used a social theory approach to public relations in which legitimization is a core function, stakeholders influence the organization's identity, and communicating identity is a legitimacy-seeking action that co-creationally drives organizational IM.

This study examined the Ottawa Sport and Entertainment Group (OSEG), a conglomerate sport organization, using a qualitative embedded exploratory case study, which allowed analysis at different organizational levels, online and offline, using thematic and content analysis. The first two research questions explored the relationships between identity, image, and legitimacy in a social media world. The second two explored the explicit effects of social media on identity, legitimacy, image, and how these constructs manifest through social media.

The first phase of the study used interview (N-52) and document (N-4) analyses to explore how identity, image, and legitimacy interact. Results showed that organizations' legitimacy-seeking behaviour drives IM. The impetus to change image comes from the outward facing legitimacy-seeking negotiation of image with external stakeholders.

In phase two, using the legitimacy framework developed by Lock, Filo, Kunkel, and Skinner (2015), 5,668 tweets and retweets were coded, revealing 10 communicated image themes that sought technical, managerial, personal, and linkage legitimacy. These types of legitimacy were present in 99.5% of tweets and retweets. They sought to build trust, reinforce an image and identity of community involvement, and create conformity pressure. Such activities indirectly encouraged or legitimized expressions of fan support while inhibiting dissenting opinions.

Previous research noted that identity and its expression through image are no longer defined solely by organizations. This study sought to extend image and identity research by suggesting legitimacy judgments drive co-creational identity and image change. The research extended Gioia, Hamilton, and Patvardhan's (2014) process model of identity-image interdependence, creating a new framework for Twitter IM. The research explored how social media technology develops organizational identity, image, and legitimacy to provide insights necessary for fostering the effective use of IM and sport PR's role within it.

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List of Abbreviations

AHL	American Hockey League
API	Application Programming Interface (Twitter)
BIRGing	Basking in Reflected Glory
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CFL	Canadian Football League
CHL	Canadian Hockey League
CORFing	Cutting off Reflected Failure
CPOL	Capture Perceptions of Organizational Legitimacy
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
IM	Image Management
IMC	Integrated Marketing Communications
MLB	Major League Baseball
MLS	Major League Soccer
NASL	North American Soccer League
NBA	National Basketball League
NFL	National Football League
NHL	National Hockey League
NCAA	National Collegiate Athletic Association
OHL	Ontario Hockey League
OI	Organizational Image
OPR	Organizational Public Relationship
OSEG	Ottawa Sport and Entertainment Group

PPP Public-Private Partnership

PR Public Relations

SM Social Media

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

In 2014, 70% of American adults identified as sport fans, averaging 7.7 hours per week consuming sport content; 38% consumed sport content at least once daily via a computer or mobile device (Harper, Dunne, Pratten, Westover, Speight, & Banoub, 2014). Public relations (PR) plays an important role in the successful operations of sport organizations (Stoldt, Dittmore, & Branvold, 2012). Regardless of a particular sport entity's size or scope, assessing and managing public perceptions is a key element in its success or failure (Pedersen, Laucella, Kian, & Geurin, 2017).

PR is the strategic management of relationships between an organization and its diverse publics through communication to achieve mutual understanding, realize organizational goals, and serve public interests (Flynn, Gregory, & Valin, 2008). Stoldt, Dittmore, and Branvold (2012) define sport public relations as “the managerial communication-based function designed to identify a sport organization's key publics, evaluate its relationships with those publics, and foster desirable relationships between the sport organization and those publics” (p. 2). L'Etang (2013b) describes sport PR as “a specialist area of PR that reveals particular insights into the role PR plays in contemporary society” (p. ix). According to the latest *Global Communications Report*, almost half of PR professionals and more than 60% of marketing executives believe their two disciplines will become more closely aligned in the next five years. Some think PR will dominate. Others think it will be dominated (Holmes & Cook, 2018).

PR concerns are ubiquitous in sport, as evidenced by the massive amount of sport content created every day by traditional media (print, television, or radio) and new/digital media (website, blogs, and social media [Pedersen, 2014]). Furthermore, PR practitioners

assist in marketing and sales activities by advancing a sport organization's agenda with key stakeholders (L'Etang, 2013b; Stoldt et al., 2012). According to the *2018 Global Communications Report*, the PR industry was poised to become a \$20 billion business sector by 2020, with a 26.2% increase in the number of required positions (Holmes & Cook, 2018).

Social media is becoming more important to PR practitioners. In the *2016 Global Communications Report*, which focused on social media, Homes and Cook (2016) stated that social media is expected to drive upwards of 75% of PR growth. PR professionals in and out of sport must therefore use social networking and social media to do their jobs competently (Moreno, Navarro, Tench, & Zerfass, 2015; Pedersen et al., 2017).

The rise of social media presents new challenges due to increasing dialogic interactions between organizations and their users, as well as among the users themselves, increasing the information available to individuals online (Gilpin, 2010; Rui & Stefanone, 2013). Through online dialogues, message receivers (i.e., stakeholders or publics¹) demand greater transparency, trust, and accountability as they construct their own social realities (Broom & Sha, 2013; Taiminen, Luoma-aho, & Tolvanen, 2015; Wilcox & Cameron, 2012). According to Ihlen and Verhoeven (2012), it is becoming more important for scholars to view PR in a social theory context, with the goal of building trust and “developing (or destroying) a company's legitimacy or ‘license’ to

¹ In stakeholder theory, the PR field is considered a bridge that connects corporate managers and the public (Moon & Hyun, 2009). Because improved public perception/image of corporate and social performances are a major impetus of stakeholder theory (Kantanen, 2012; Sethi, 1979), it taps into the PR need to communicate and build mutual understanding among various stakeholders (Grunig & Grunig, 2000; Grunig & Hunt, 1984). In this research, the terms stakeholder (a management term to describe individuals or organizations who can affect or are affected by an organization achieving its objectives) and publics (a PR term for stakeholders viewed as recipients or audiences who receive organizational messages) will be used interchangeably (Rawlins, 2006). Though some scholars prefer to talk of publics (Aldoory & Grunig, 2012) instead of stakeholders, the central idea is still mutual dependence. The term stakeholders will be used for the rest of the paper.

operate in its community” (p. 1). Legitimacy has been identified as a key driver of PR activity (Russell & Lamme, 2016), but this conclusion has not received the attention that such an identification would warrant in PR literature (Fitch & L’Etang, 2017).

Macnamara and Zerfass (2012) cited a loss of control over messages and image-building as a major risk faced by PR practitioners using social media, prompting Grunig (2013) to suggest that images were now “cultivated” rather than “managed” (p. 20). Since the rise of social media, organizations no longer have the freedom to manipulate or control their public image.

Because the dialectical relationship between an organization and its stakeholders (now aided by social media [Taylor & Kent, 2014]) is constantly changing (Hung, 2005), PR professionals can no longer simply maintain stakeholder relationships. They must now cultivate a shared understanding in an ongoing communication process (Grunig, 2013). PR has been slow to adopt such an understanding in a societal context (Fitch & L’Etang, 2017). Despite the increased importance of organizational interactions with stakeholders, contemporary sport businesses fail to understand and appreciate the benefits offered by skilled PR personnel (Hopwood, 2005/2007; Hopwood, Skinner, & Kitchin, 2010; Waters, 2013). This lack of understanding may come from PR’s struggle to find its niche, both in academia and in practice (L’Etang, 2013b; Fitch & L’Etang, 2017; Waters, 2013). Taiminen et al. (2015) saw a need for a more nuanced understanding of PR strategies, particularly within the context of online communication. This need is predicated on the growing ineffectiveness of organization-controlled communication (Grunig, 2009), as message receivers interact with organizations more freely, quickly, and influentially within social media (Luoma-aho & Vos, 2010).

A social theory perspective provides the framework for the theoretical tools needed to interpret social phenomena (Seidman, 2016). A social theory perspective is the “effective effort by communities of scholars to make sense of their social world” (Baran & Davis, 2011, p. 4). Social theory helps us assess the value and meaning of what we see around us (Ihlen & Verhoeven, 2012). A social theory approach to PR requires an understanding of society; the researcher must question the values and meanings of what they see in the public sphere, a place where individuals can come together for public debate (Verhoeven & Ihlen, 2014). The public sphere is a social construct where people reproduce and reinforce their own interpretations and knowledge of a perceived reality (Heide, 2009; Verhoeven & Ihlen, 2014).

In such a worldview, PR must be studied as a social phenomenon, and an organization’s interactions with stakeholders must include corporate social performance consideration, which includes the greater society in which the organization operates (Christensen, Mackay, & Whetten, 2014; Cooper, 2017). For example, many sport organizations feel the need to meet the public expectations held by their communities, and they attempt to meet these expectations through community outreach (Babiak & Trendafilova, 2011; Sheth & Babiak, 2010).

Ihlen and Verhoeven (2012) argue that this approach allows insights to be garnered from the macro, meso, and micro levels. In other words, using a social theory perspective can help make sense of PR at the societal, organizational/managerial, and individual levels through an understanding of how social structures influence the PR function (Ihlen & Verhoeven, 2012). Using a social theory perspective of PR constrains

findings to socially constructed cultural contexts due to its sociopolitical nature (Verheoven & Ihlen, 2014).

As Smith (2010) noted, the proliferation of social media communication platforms have both helped and challenged traditional PR strategies. The trend toward a networked media environment (Kozinets, 2016; Wells, 2015) has led to a rethinking of PR in today's mediated society (Valentini, Kruckeberg, & Starck, 2012; L'Etang, 2013a). While social media is an important instrument in the creation and maintenance of a favourable image — an essential function of PR (Bhatti, 2015) — it also presents important new challenges. In the social media world, deliberate image construction is vastly more difficult due to increasing interactions among users and the growing information available to individuals online (Gilpin, 2010; Rui & Stefanone, 2013). According to Taylor and Kent (2010), “the question today is not so much a question of ‘if’ but ‘how’ to use social media in public relations” (p. 207).

Sport Public Relations and Image Management

Traditional image research in PR often focused completely on images, perceptions, or impressions (Nekmat, Gower, & Ye, 2014). Image is considered the symbolic representation (which can be expressed in language) of the organization, created by its members and communicated to its stakeholders to influence their perceptions (Alvesson, 1990; Gilpin, 2010; Gioia, Hamilton, & Patvardhan, 2014). Perceptions provide a frame of reference when determining how individuals respond to organizations (Bhattacharya, Rao, & Glenn, 1995). Impressions are organizational self-presentations designed to influence the image others have of them (Rosenfeld, Giacalone, & Riordan, 1995).

Scholars have more recently suggested that image-related PR research requires a shift toward investigating the management of image from an audience perspective (Nekmat et al., 2014). Nekmat and her colleagues stated that this is especially true in an online environment, which requires a change from “managing the Internet as a one-way communication tool for image maintenance, to one aimed at understanding how Internet users become image stakeholders who collectively create and alter others’ perceptions of organizational images” (p. 288).

Lock, Filo, Kunkel, and Skinner (2015) later suggested these perceptions of organizational images by stakeholders could be scrutinized through legitimacy dimensions. Legitimacy dimensions consist of aspects of organizational actions, structures, or outcomes that are subject to evaluations by stakeholders when they make their legitimacy judgments (Bitektine, 2011). When discussing legitimacy dimensions, it is important to understand that organizational legitimacy is the socially acceptable behaviour of an organization that is consistent with societally defined values and norms (Suchman, 1995).

As outlined in Figure 1.1, this study used an interdisciplinary understanding of organizational image (OI) using the definition of image provided on page five. The research viewed image as the authentic outward expression of organizational identity (actively or passively [Taiminen et al. 2015]) appealing to the interests of external stakeholders (Lamertz, Carney, & Bastien, 2008; Scott & Lane, 2000). Authentic presentation of an organization’s identity is vital to its credibility and transparency (Gurău, 2008). It helps create organizational legitimacy by demonstrating the sincerity

and consistency of the organization's actions (Gilpin, Edward, Polazzolo, & Brody, 2010).

Organizational identity is a self-referential concept defined by members of the organization (Gioia, Schultz, & Corley, 2000). It is negotiated with external stakeholders and is the cognitive organizational character or self-image held by internal stakeholders, and it is used to explain organizational action (Gioia, Patvardhan, Hamilton, & Corley 2013; Scott & Lane, 2000). It addresses the derivation of shared meanings with stakeholders, separating it from corporate identity and image studies, which use a marketing-oriented approach that focuses on specific products or actions of organizational identity that seek to communicate a specific image to stakeholders (Cornelissen, Haslam, & Balmer, 2007; Moingeon & Soenen, 2002). An organization may hold multiple images based on multiple interpretations of the identity it communicates through language or symbolism due to the polytextuality of its stakeholders (Christensen & Cornelissen, 2010; Ihlen and Verhoeven, 2012) and its desire to appeal to stakeholder interests (Lamertz, Carney, & Bastien, 2008; Scott & Lane, 2000).

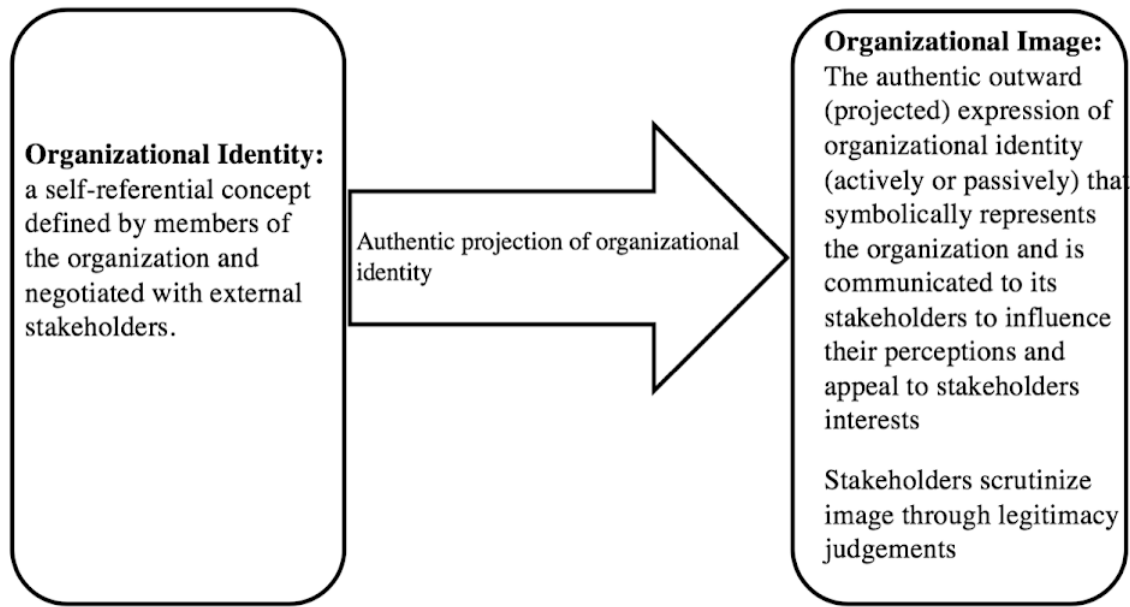


Figure 1.1 Relationship of image and identity terms used in this research.

These definitions allowed a social-oriented approach to the research, as opposed to a marketing-oriented approach. Marketing-oriented approaches are used in corporate-level identity and image studies, where identity is considered central and enduring, and image can be managed by the organization (e.g., Balmer & Greyson, 2003; Moingeon & Soenen, 2002). A social-oriented approach encompasses the influence of internal and external stakeholders in image messaging. From the perspective of a social-oriented approach, while internal stakeholders sought to project the identity (desired external image) of the organization to external stakeholders, external stakeholders interpreted and processed those images (Scott & Lane, 2000), creating a perception of the organization based in part on legitimacy (Elsbach, 2003; Lock et al., 2015). These external stakeholders might also influence organizational identity by compelling internal stakeholders to respond to their demands and preferences, lessening the boundaries

between the organization and its stakeholders (Gioia et al., 2014). Thus, in the communication of their social judgments (which are aided by social media), organizational stakeholders have the power to change an organization's identity through dialogue (Gioia et al., 2014; Theunissen, 2014) or, failing that, through conflict and confrontation, a considerable threat in an age where a single Twitter user may have thousands of followers to amplify their voice (Jin, Liu, & Austin, 2014).

External stakeholders can also change public perceptions of an organization through public interactions (e.g., those aided by social media [Taiminen et al., 2015]) with other stakeholders, creating refracted images (i.e., images different from the original image projected by the organization [Rindova, 1999]). The view of corporate image as a visual manifestation of the organization's identity, as demonstrated in traditional marketing, advertising, and corporate identity and image studies, represented a constricted view that neglected the dialogic, co-creational impact of stakeholders and belied the need for transparency and image authenticity (Theunissen, 2014).

Statement of the Problem

A social theory approach to PR implies organizational image and organizational identity are interrelated social constructions of reality. This relationship is especially strong in sport, as today's fans (defined as "individuals who are interested in and follow a sport, team and/or athlete" [Wann, Melnick, Russell, & Pease, 2001, p. 2]) seek authenticity and transparency in their relationships with the teams they support (Pronschinske et al., 2012). Fans and sport organizations interact in the context of social media, a dynamic environment that continues to unfold and develop as it gains widespread popularity and acceptance with teams, leagues, fans, and sport governing

bodies (Hutchins, 2014), making it a double-edged sword in the context of PR. It can be used as a powerful tool to create positive relationships with fans (Avidar, 2013), but it is more open and transparent than traditional media (Jin et al., 2014). This increases the potential for damage to image and identity as fans and disgruntled or disappointed athletes post negative social media messages (Smith, Smith, & Sanderson, 2012). The development and proliferation of unmonitored social media posts that require PR management is one of the pivotal challenges for the sport industry today (Boyle & Haynes, 2014).

This urgency is not merely a result of the uncontrolled exchanges that characterize the social media context. Another aspect of social media that makes PR management essential is that social media has a speed of communication hitherto unknown in the PR world (Boyle & Haynes, 2014). Traditional PR was both controlled and asynchronous; a corporation could create a press release, monitor the response to it, and remain firmly in control of the flow of information (Grunig, 2009; Wright & Hinson, 2008). Now a single social media post can go viral in hours, being seen by thousands or hundreds of thousands of Internet users. This can spark a firestorm in a much shorter time than seen previously in traditional PR activities (Grunig, 2009; Luoma-aho & Vos, 2010).

Corporations, including those in the sport industry, require new understandings of how to manage image online. The first impressions formed on social media are immediate and can be durable based on online social interactions (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Most existing research, particularly related to the use of social media in PR, has focused on how social media platforms can be leveraged to the advantage of organizations for relationship-building and dialogue with publics (Kennedy &

Sommerfeldt, 2015). However, many studies also show that organizations are continuing to carry out their communication using a one-way approach, usually limiting themselves to disseminating content instead of fostering participation, thus maintaining the spirit of control typical of traditional PR and corporate communication research (Navarro, Moreno, & Al-Sumait, 2017).

Online stakeholders can now share online conversations with organizations and other stakeholders, changing the traditional dynamic of image management (IM [Huang-Horwitz & Freberg, 2016]). In their review of social media research within sport management, Filo, Lock, and Karg (2014) noted that most research aligns with a service-dominant logic based on service marketing and that only three articles (Hambrick, Frederic, & Sanderson, 2013; Hull, 2014; Lebel & Danylcuk, 2012) used an image-related theoretical or conceptual framework, while one study (Gibbs & Haynes, 2013) used a PR context. This buttresses the arguments of Waters (2013) and L'Etang (2013b) that little attention has been paid to PR within sport and that social media studies in a sport environment from a PR perspective remain underdeveloped.

Purpose of the Research

In light of the problem identified above, the purpose of this qualitative embedded exploratory case study was to explore how the emergence of social media technology and its use contributes to the development of organizational identity, organizational image, and organizational legitimacy in a social media world. An embedded case study also allowed for movement between the macro (organizational), mezzo (team), and micro (individuals with the team or organization). This allowed the research to make sense of the PR function at all levels, as required in a social theory approach to PR (Ihlen &

Verhoeven, 2012). The use of these strata will be further explained and rationalized in the methodologies section.

Drawing from research on organizational identity (e.g. Gioia et al., 2013; Scott & Lane, 2000; Parent & Foreman, 2007), image (e.g. Gioia et al., 2014 ; Lock et al., 2015), and organizational legitimacy (e.g. Bitektine, 2011; Bitektine & Haack, 2015), the study sought to analytically capture more information on how these three concepts interact and are implemented in the current social media climate to move research along what Mintberg (2005) and Weick (1995a, 1995b) referred to as theoretical continuums. This notion is further expanded upon at the beginning of Chapter 2. The study concludes with an adapted and extended model of Gioia et al.'s (2014) process model of identity-image interdependence (Figure 6.1) and a proposed conceptual framework (Figure 6.2) that links legitimacy-seeking activities as the underlying goal of co-creational IM on Twitter in the specific context of sport.

With the emergence of social media technology, PR has taken on new aspects of practice (Macnamara, 2015). Not only are communications between organizations and their stakeholders faster and easier than ever before, but the ease of communication through social media has created an expectation of two-way, dialogic communication (Avidar, 2013) that is fundamentally at odds with traditional organization-controlled PR. Since the interaction between an organization and its stakeholders is the source of the organization's image (Gioia et al., 2014), this shift in expectations for communications affects broader notions of what identity and image mean for organizations today.

This study used a social theory PR approach to fulfil two purposes: first, to explore the broader notions of organizational identity, organizational image, and

organizational legitimacy for sport organizations in the social media world, and second, to explore how the more specific, explicit effects of these constructs may manifest through social media itself. To study these issues, the research drew upon an understanding of the social construction of identity, image, and legitimacy, as well as the dialogic theory of communication.

Research Questions

This study was carried out in two phases through a single qualitative embedded exploratory case study of the Ottawa Sports and Entertainment Group (OSEG), a multi-team sport organization that includes the Ottawa RedBlacks of the Canadian Football League (CFL); the Ottawa Fury of the North American Soccer League (NASL), currently playing in the United Soccer League (USL); and the Ottawa 67's of the Canadian Hockey League (CHL). The first part of the study explored the broader notions of organizational identity, organizational image, and organizational legitimacy for sport organizations. It used the macro-level concept of legitimacy to understand the connections among the OSEG's concepts of identity, image, and legitimacy through interviews and document analysis. The following research questions were developed:

RQ1. How do organizational identity, organizational image, and organizational legitimacy interact within a sport organization in the social media world?

RQ2. How does the understanding of legitimacy from internal and external stakeholders affect the co-creation of organizational image in a sport organization in the social media world?

The second phase of the study sought to explore the more specific, explicit effects of social media in terms of identity, legitimacy, and image, and how these organizational constructs manifest through social media. To do this, the study shifted to Twitter. The following research questions guided the second part of the research:

RQ3: How does the usage of social media explicitly affect the creation of organizational identity, organizational image, and organizational legitimacy in a sport organization?

RQ4: How does social media usage directly affect the co-creation of organizational image for a sport organization?

Significance of the Study

By answering these four research questions, the study sought to achieve a better understanding of the relationships between identity, image, and legitimacy in a sport organization's offline and online communication activities. In the social media world, images are not merely created as the result of careful manipulation by PR practitioners. They instead represent an act of co-creation between organizations and their stakeholders (Gioia et al., 2014; Wehmeier, 2006). The research also sought to understand the role of legitimacy in the co-creational process, an important consideration when studying image through a social theory perspective of PR (Ihlen & Verhoeven, 2012; Waeraas, 2009).

The study investigated the resultant role of sport PR in overall professional sport IM. Whereas contemporary PR scholarship has predominantly followed a functional and normative paradigm (Theunissen, 2014), this study used a social theory approach that

resulted in a co-creative outlook to examine the ways in which the modern, dialogic relationships between organizations and stakeholders affect identity, image, and legitimacy. It also examined the explicit role that social media platforms like Twitter play in this shift from traditional, controlled PR activities to ones that are more co-creative.

The widespread popularity of social media (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Luoma-aho & Vos, 2010) underscores the importance of developing new theoretical directions regarding IM (Gilpin, 2010; Nekmat et al., 2014). This popularity creates special challenges for sport PR due to the rapid impact of technology on professional sport image and identity management (Hambrick & Sanderson, 2013). This study sought to provide insights from a practical viewpoint about organizational IM. These insights will help PR staff and sport managers design informed strategies that foster effective use of IM in a digital and convergent media environment with a wide range of linkages between contemporary media platforms (Meikle & Young, 2011). Partially because of these linkages, social media continues to help blur the lines between PR and marketing, affecting the development of PR academically and in practice (Place, Smith, & Lee, 2016).

Research Context

Sport Conglomerates

PR plays an important role in the successful operations of sport organizations (Stoldt, Dittmore, & Branvold, 2012). Regardless of a sport entity's size or scope, assessing and managing public perceptions is a key element in its success or failure (Pedersen et al., 2017). It is important to define the context of research when studying

organizational concepts, such as identity, image, and legitimacy, with stakeholders being the key informants (Bitektine, 2011; Gioia et al., 2014; Lock et al., 2015).

The research sought to study these concepts within a Tier 1 multi-team sport conglomerate. This allowed for greater data comparison between teams due to the polyphony of image-creating voices (Christensen & Cornelissen, 2010). A conglomerate with Tier 1 teams, who play at the highest level of competition (O'Reilly & Séguin, 2013), was also sought for its ability to employ several workers within its media and community relations departments. This characteristic is relevant to the study because professional leagues, teams, and tours at the highest level include multiple employees in their media and community relations departments. These are the terms most used in professional sport to designate the PR function (Mullin, Hardy, & Sutton, 2014; Stoldt, Pratt, & Dittmore, 2007) and represent positions with a similar set of primary responsibilities (Stoldt et al., 2012). In a multi-team sport organization, these specialists operate across multiple teams and leagues, resulting in a rich repository of data to understand interactions between members of the organization and the external organizational environment.

While conglomerate team ownership is still rare, it is a growing trend for teams in the in the same city to be owned by the same entity. Conglomerates such as OSEG achieve business synergies and reduce costs in a marketplace where organizations struggle to compete for sponsors and fans (Whittall, 2014). Ferran Soriano, CEO of City Football Group, explains, "We are proud to offer a collaborative and integrated approach to the football, marketing, media and commercial development of all the clubs in the City family" (Whittall, 2014, para. 4). Other benefits of owning multiple franchises in the

same sport include a team's ability to have direct control over the training methods, coaching philosophies, and medical treatment care for the development of its players in the minor leagues (Warnsby, 2018).

Examples of such ownership structures include Kronke Sports Enterprises (National Hockey League's [NHL] Colorado Avalanche, National Basketball Association's [NBA] Denver Nuggets, Major League Soccer's [MLS] Colorado Rapids), Terry Pegula (National Football Association's [NFL] Buffalo Bills, NHL's Buffalo Sabers), the Ilitch Family (Major League Baseball's [MLB] Detroit Tigers, NHL's Detroit Red Wings), Monumental Sports and Entertainment (NBA's Washington Wizards, NHL's Washington Capitals), and Tom Benson (NFL's New Orleans Saints, NBA's New Orleans Pelicans). In Canada, this was seen with Maple Leaf Sports and Entertainment (NHL's Toronto Maple Leafs, NBA's Toronto Raptors, American Hockey League's [AHL] Toronto Marlies, Canadian Football League's [CFL] Toronto Argonauts, MLS's Toronto FC), Calgary Sports and Entertainment Group (NHL's Calgary Flames, Canadian Hockey League's [CHL] Calgary Hitman, CFL's Calgary Stampeders, National Lacrosse League's [NLL] Calgary Roughnecks), True North Sports and Entertainment (NHL's Winnipeg Jets, AHL's Manitoba Moose), and the Oilers Entertainment Group (NHL's Edmonton Oilers, CHL's Edmonton Oil Kings, AHL's Bakersfield Condors).

It was challenging to find an appropriate sport organization to participate in the study. While a number of individual employees of conglomerate sport organizations expressed interest and support of the research, the study requests did not proceed due to challenges in gaining formal support from the companies approached. Formal support

was necessary to acquire the data needed for this study, which included interviews with organizational employees across multiple functional departments (i.e., PR, marketing, digital media, ticketing, and senior management), as well as the authority to share internal documents, such as employee manuals and department planning documents.

Nine organizations were approached, and all declined for various reasons. One organization cited recent leadership changes at the senior management level; four others noted that they had company policies preventing participation in academic research due to the volume of requests; two did not view the research as having a great-enough direct functional benefit for the resources needed to participate; and two others were unable to participate due to what they perceived as unnecessary risks associated with interviewing external stakeholders, as they faced issues surrounding the use of public funds in building a new stadium.

Ottawa Sport and Entertainment Group

Due to the difficulty in securing a conglomerate Tier 1 sport organization, attention was turned to conglomerate organizations with sport teams that did not compete at the Tier 1 level. The first organization approached was OSEG, which agreed to participate in the study. OSEG owns three teams: the Ottawa 67's of the CHL, the Ottawa Fury of the NASL, and the Ottawa RedBlacks of the CFL. They are also responsible for the management of TD Place Stadium, a 24,000-seat outdoor stadium and a 9,800-seat hockey rink, on behalf of the City of Ottawa.

While OSEG consists of Tier 2 sport teams (not at the highest level of competition in North America [O'Reilly & Séguin, 2013]), they possess many of the characteristics of Tier 1 sport; they employ multiple workers within their media and

community relations departments to service the three teams, the stadium, and Lansdown Live (the entertainment area surrounding the stadium). They also drew comparable numbers of fans to its competitions, as evidenced when comparing OSEG to the NHL's Ottawa Senators, Ottawa's only Tier 1 sport franchise. According to the *2018 Ottawa RedBlacks' Media Guide*, 152 full-time staff are employed at OSEG, seven of whom are in the PR department, and six of whom are in community relations/OSEG Foundation. For comparison, the *2017 Ottawa Senators Media Guide* lists 182 full time staff, with five in the PR department and 11 in community relations/Ottawa Senators Foundation. Total attendance numbers between the organizations are also comparable. The Ottawa Senators registered an attendance number of 686,534 for the 2016-17 season ("NHL Attendance Report," 2017). OSEG's three teams combined reached an attendance of 455,688 during the same time period, with the Ottawa RedBlacks drawing 220,706 ("Ottawa RedBlacks attendance," 2017), the OHL's 67's pulling 130,628 ("Ottawa 67's yearly attendance," 2017), and the Ottawa Fury registering 104,354 (Ottawa Fury, 2017).

Differences were noted when reviewing social media statistics between the two organizations; OSEG's online engagement reach is lower than that of Tier One sport. OSEG controls eight Twitter accounts, one for each team and its respective mascot, as well as a corporate account and one for the TD Place Stadium. They also control a Facebook account for each team and the stadium, along with a YouTube channel for each team. Senators Sports and Entertainment manage three Twitter accounts, one for each team, the mascot, and the arena (The Canadian Tire Centre). They also control a team Facebook account, Instagram account, and YouTube channel.

As of April 13, 2018, the Ottawa Senators had 579,396 Twitter followers, 249,212 Instagram followers, and 8,409 YouTube subscribers. OSEG had 162,824 combined Twitter followers (Ottawa RedBlacks, 119,739; Ottawa 67's, 26,503; Ottawa Fury, 16,582), 49,156 Instagram followers (Ottawa RedBlacks, 32,636; Ottawa 67's, 6,777; Ottawa Fury, 9,743), and 1,995 YouTube subscribers (Ottawa RedBlacks, 653; Ottawa 67's, 415; Ottawa Fury, 927). However, the size of the OSEG's social media following compared to other Tier 1 organizations was deemed not significant to the research. Little difference has been observed between the communication patterns of professional sports teams despite large variances in their follower counts (Abeza, O'Reilly, Séguin, & Nzindukiyimana, 2017).

The Senators' mascot, "Spartacat," had 117 Twitter followers. The RedBlacks' mascot, "Big Joe," had 2,021 followers. "Sparky," the Fury mascot, had 580. The 67's mascot, "Riley," had 367. The Senators, RedBlacks, Fury, and 67's have 316,753, 48,648, 18,107, and 10,488 Facebook followers respectively. The Canadian Tire Centre has 26,980 Facebook followers and 28,119 Twitter followers. TD Place had 4,830 Instagram followers and 7,352 Facebook followers. Each team has a Snapchat account, but the metrics for their usage are not publicly available.

In 2007, Jeff Hunt, the owner of the Ottawa 67's, joined a group of local investors to bring CFL football back to Ottawa and renovate both the stadium and hockey rink. Ottawa's football tradition dates back to 1876 with the establishment of the Ottawa Rough Riders, a founding member of the CFL in 1958 (OSEG, 2014). The team ceased operation in 1996. In 2002, Ottawa was awarded another franchise, the Ottawa Renegades, which was suspended indefinitely by the league due to financial instability in

2006 (Koreen, 2013). In 2008, Hunt and his real-estate partners were awarded a third Ottawa-based CFL expansion franchise and given rights by the City of Ottawa to revitalize the 48-acre downtown Lansdowne site as part of the Lansdowne Partnership Plan with the City of Ottawa (OSEG, 2014). John Pugh, the owner of the Ottawa Fury — the highest-ranking local soccer team in the city that played in the United Soccer League's Premier Development League — joined OSEG in 2011. The Fury then moved to the NASL, regarded as the second highest level of soccer in North America behind MLS (OSEG, 2014).

Since its inception, the Ottawa RedBlacks have become a model franchise with the most admired fan base in the league (Carlucci, 2016). Their success is attributed to several factors, including strong local ownership and the new venue in which they play (Sutcliffe, 2016). The other two teams have not experienced similar success. The Ottawa 67's saw a significant drop in attendance when they moved to the NHL's Ottawa Senators suburban arena for two seasons, beginning in 2012, due to the stadium and arena reconstruction at Lansdowne. Even when they returned, their crowds did not (Hofley, 2015). The Ottawa Fury lost \$2 million during the 2015-16 season before announcing that they were withdrawing from the NASL and joining the United Soccer League, which is perceived to be a lower league (Baines, 2016), just after the completion of this dissertation's data collection.

OSEG also seeks to make Lansdowne Live a year-round destination for sport, entertainment, dining, nightlife, shopping, festivals, recreation, and condominium living, making it a signature destination for the city (OSEG, 2014). OSEG has noted that every

role, from athletes and coaches to sales professionals, customer service professionals, and facility maintenance play a critical role in the organization's success (OSEG, 2014).

OSEG's value statements are listed in its employee manual and include a focus on teamwork, integrity, passion, and innovation. They proclaim that customer service is not a department; it is everyone's job. The company lists six vision statements in its manual, four of which are externally focused. These four statements are listed below (OSEG, 2014):

1. We want to make our community a better place in which to live by respecting and reflecting community values and by promoting the benefits of participation in sports and an active, healthy lifestyle.
2. We want to build strong, lasting relationships with partners, community leaders and service organizations, and instill within them a sense of pride in their association with the Company and TD Place.
3. We want to create a best in class destination for families and guests of all ages that offers unique sports and entertainment experiences and creates cherished memories.
4. We want to leverage our reputation as business and community leaders and the beauty and lifestyle of our community to attract high-caliber athletes and skilled coaches to consistently compete as "best-in-class" teams.

The internally-focused statements are as follows (OSEG, 2014):

1. We strive to attract, retain and motivate talented people to work with us as a cohesive team, sculpting one of the best sports and entertainment organizations in Canada.
2. We want to achieve a sustainable level of profitability by increasing fan loyalty and sales with superior customer service, an efficient/modern venue and entertaining experiences.

CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL APPROACH OF THE STUDY AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework of the Research

There is no single agreed-upon definition of theory (Corley & Gioia, 2011), which may explain why it is so hard to develop strong theory in behavioural sciences (Sutton & Staw, 1995). In qualitative research, the role of theory is two-fold. Theory can serve as a lens that guides the direction of a study, or it can represent the end-product of qualitative research, as is the case in grounded theory-building (Creswell, 2014).

In this dissertation, theory guided the study by helping to answer the four research questions. The study's theoretical frameworks needed to capture an organizational and individual level of analysis due to IM's conceptualization as a co-creative process driven at the organizational level by PR professionals, who seek legitimacy from individual external stakeholders. The theories used in this study were PR theory (social theory and dialogic), organizational theory (organizational identity and organizational image), and neo-institutionalism. Neo-institutionalism was used in this research due to the aforementioned social theory PR approach and its introduction of legitimacy.

PR theory is founded on the organizational-public relationship (Broom, Cutlip, & Allen, 2009; Wilcox & Cameron, 2012). Organizational theory consists of various approaches to organizational analysis, one of which is organizational identity and image (Whetten, 2006). Neo-institutionalism explains why and how institutions emerge in certain ways and contexts, one of which is legitimacy (Lounsbury & Zhao, 2013). Individuals who claim to use or develop theory must articulate their own understanding of the concept, as is done in this literature review.

While theory is often described as “a statement of relations among concepts within a set of boundary assumptions and constraints” (Bacharach, 1989, p. 496), this view of theory only covers the explanation of phenomena. As Van Knippenberg (2011) noted, “Good theory explains. It captures causal relationships between concepts with a sufficient level of specificity to provide an explanation with enough detail to be insightful and to offer fertile ground for further theory development as well as practical application” (p. 20).

Dubin (1978) argued that in the social and behavioural sciences, theory seeks to understand and predict social phenomena. He asserted that prediction is focused on outcomes, and understanding is focused on interactions. While these two goals are compatible, they are often accomplished separately (Dubin, 1978).

This dissertation focused on understanding interactions rather than predicting outcomes. It sought to move PR, organizational, and neo-institutional theory along what Weick (1995a, 1995b) called theoretical continuums. Weick viewed theory as a developmental process that begins with guesses and speculations and ends with models that explain, predict, and delight.

Mintzberg (2005) built on the notion of continuum, suggesting that theory boils down to explaining things, and such explanations fall on a continuum with two ends: at one end are lists or categories, and at the other end are complete explanatory models. Between these endpoints are typologies, models depicting relationships between variables, and models proposing causation. Mintzberg is quite inclusive in what constitutes theory. While a classificatory scheme does not have the same status as an established theory, any form of scientific inquiry requires the classification of observed

phenomena (Chelladurai, 2011). As Hambrick (1984) notes, “To classify things is to bring parsimony and mental order to one’s view of them.” Mintzberg (2005 p.2) also noted the dynamism of theory, quoting renowned psychologist Donald Hebb; “A good theory is one that holds together long enough to get you to a better theory.”

Mintzberg, Weick, and other theory scholars, such as Whetten (1989), Sutton, and Straw (1995), all agree that theory must be insightful. If new categorizations fail to be novel — if they do not allow us to see or explain things differently — they do not develop theory (Chellandurai, 2011). This dissertation sought to augment previous research in PR through IM as image co-creation, using organizational and neo-institutional theory, to move PR scholarship along Mintzberg’s continuum (Figure 2.1).

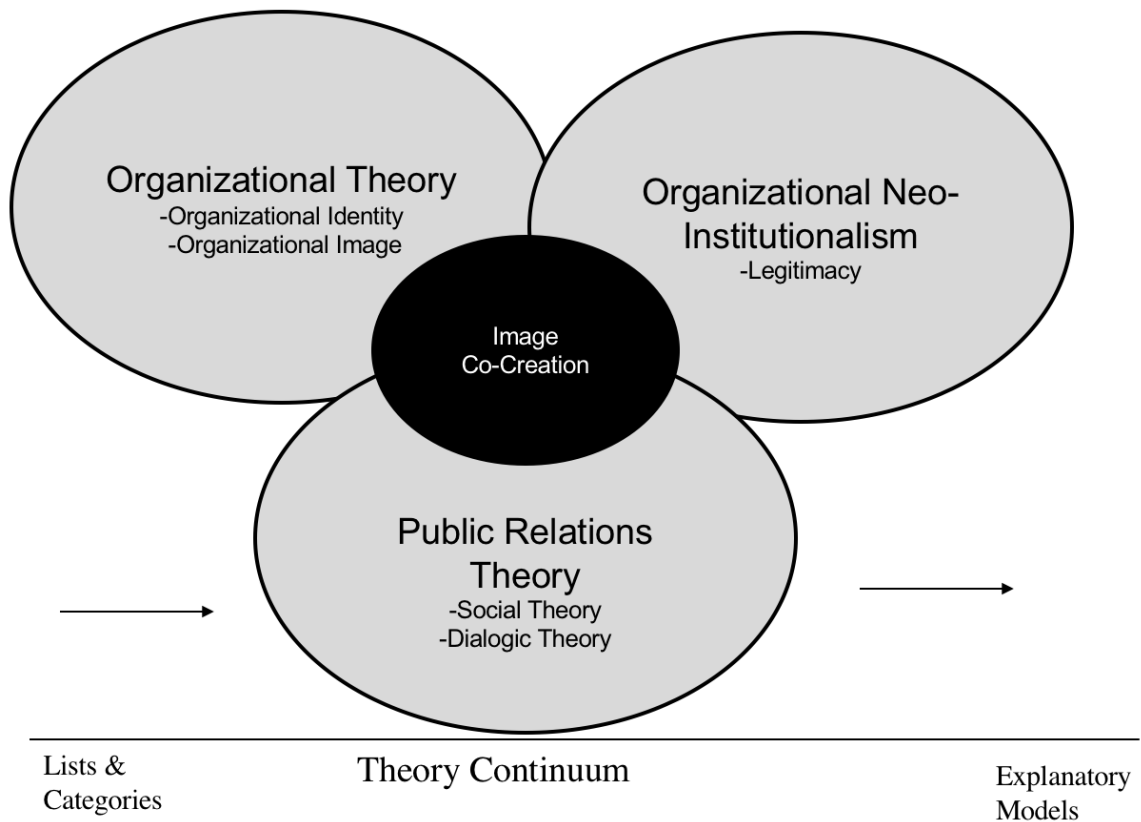


Figure 2.1. Theory continuum progression path.

Literature

The literature review describes current knowledge of PR, organizational identity, image, legitimacy, and online social networking. This chapter follows a thematic structure, with each section presenting current research on a topic relevant to the study. It also presents the interrelationships of these topics.

Public Relations

PR has been characterized as an applied science and management discipline in communication theory (Pieczka & L'Etang, 2006), and the term PR connotes different meanings in different cultural contexts (L'Etang, 2013a). Although PR's origin is

debated, researchers generally agree that the modern PR industry emerged in the late 19th century, primarily in the United States (Heath & Coombs, 2005). As the roles of organizations changed (see Appendix A), so did the concept and practice of PR (Ihlen & van Ruler, 2007). These changes are summarized in Appendix A. This created multiple definitions of PR, some of which overlap (L'Etang, 2013b).

Gregory (2015) defined PR as a descriptive collection of communication techniques. Others (Grunig, 2013; Kim & Ni, 2010) defined it as an organizational function and/or part of strategic management, some even suggesting that it was subsumed by integrated marketing communications (IMC [Smith, 2013]). Others (e.g., Ihlen & Verhoeven, 2009; van Ruler & Vercic, 2004) defined it as an activity that is part of societal dynamics, while still others viewed it as manipulation and propaganda (Dinan & Miller, 2007) or, paradoxically, as a normative ideal of ways in which PR ought to be practiced (Gregory, 2015; Grunig, 2013). This study used the definition provided by the Canadian Public Relations Society: "Public relations is the strategic management of relationships between an organization and its diverse publics, through the use of communication, to achieve mutual understanding, realize organizational goals and serve the public interest." (Flynn et al., 2008, p. 1)

Some PR scholars suggested that a limited number of theories and methodologies have been employed in the field, and there is little evidence of a dominant theory or methodology embraced by everyone in academia (Meadows & Meadows, 2014; Russell & Lamme, 2016). In their review of PR scholarship in the *Journal of Public Relations Research* and *Public Relations Review*, Meadow and Meadows (2014) discovered that only 87 of the 549 articles reviewed used a theory or theoretical model. The most

predominant theories or models were agenda-setting (15), the situational theory of publics (12), and framing (10). They also noted that qualitative research was used 55.9% of the time, and critical analysis/critique/essay were the most frequently used research output. Sisco et al. (2011) concluded that PR research has plateaued in part because scholars use only the term theory to describe tested theory, proposed theories, theoretical concepts, models, frameworks, and other quasi-theory related approaches. In this research, theory must consist of the three fundamental elements proposed by Whetten (1989): it must provide a description of the domain or subject, it must be explanatory, and it must discover context and boundaries.

Zoch, Fussell, and Collins (2007) suggested PR abandon the quest for a dominant theory altogether, and Curtin (2012) suggested that the pursuit of a grand unified theory falsely assumes that the social sciences operate under the same laws and principles as natural sciences. He posited that there is no single paradigm appropriate for research in PR. Ihlen and Verhoeven (2012) echoed this view, advocating that researchers should embrace the field's diversity rather than look for a single approach to PR. Consequently, there are multiple constructed definitions of PR (L'Etang, 2013a; Russell & Lamme, 2016). Thus, PR research is informed by many assumptions, values, and worldviews that have all been subject to debate (Davidson, 2016; Fitch & L'Etang, 2017; Russell & Lamme, 2016).

The same definitional challenges are observed in the practice of PR. In 2011, the Public Relations Society of America launched a crowd-sourcing initiative to create a baseline definition of PR that encapsulated the fundamental basis of the role played by professionals (Rickey, 2012). However, the initiative failed in its stated purpose of

creating a unified definition, because PR's role is more complex and far-reaching than what a single definition can provide (Rickey, 2012). However, the discussion it led to was still valuable. Terms that commonly appear in definitions of PR include deliberate, planned, performance, public interest, two-way communication, and strategic management function (Cameron, Wilcox, Reber, & Shin, 2008; Wilcox & Cameron, 2012). These terms reflect the field's dominant functional/normative paradigm of Grunig's (1992/2009/2013) excellence framework (Gower, 2006; L'Etang, 2013a).

The excellence framework came from a landmark study in 1984 that concluded PR could achieve organizational goals through its communicative interactions with strategic constituencies, its identification of organizational stakeholders, its classification of potential publics, and its use of symmetrical communication to develop important relationships (Grunig, 2013). Some researchers have contested the excellence framework (e.g., Edwards, 2012; Gower, 2006) due in part to the changing concept of publics in a convergent digital society where universal objectivity may not exist, and organizational relationships with stakeholders continuously form, dissolve, and take different shapes (Valentini et al., 2012). Paradigms such as the excellence framework show that organizations seek relationships with the publics that are most important to them. However, such a top-down approach only provides the illusion that organizations decide whether to establish, define, and manage those relationships (Valentini et al., 2012); recent studies with practitioners have shown that it is no longer viable to control organizational dialog in a social media age (Solis & Breakenridge, 2009; Wigley & Fontenot, 2010). Instead, organizations must identify issues and the online places of interaction where those issues are discussed (Luoma-aho & Vos, 2010). They must also

try to use shared control of communication to point the debate surrounding the issue towards the organization's own viewpoint (Lane, 2014). The literature has demonstrated the need to move from an organizational approach to PR towards a public-centric or co-creational approach to PR (Botan & Taylor, 2004; Valentini et al., 2012) in which PR professionals are now required to use shared control of communication to point the debate surrounding the issue towards the organization's own viewpoint (Lane, 2014).

This shift in PR dynamics drives the need for this study. Much of the existing scholarly literature surrounding PR gravitates towards the top-down, organization-created paradigms that flourished in the past. The advent of the Internet and social media has overturned the foundations upon which many of these traditional definitions were built. Thus, this study adopts Flynn et al.'s (2008) definition, which refers to an organization's diverse publics — that is, all the stakeholders with a vested interest in the organization. In their assessment of the state of the field of PR, Botan and Taylor (2004) suggested that a co-creational approach — which they defined as one that focused on long-term relationships, shared meanings, and interpretations beyond the simple achievement of organizational goals — was the future of PR studies, supporting the need for this shift to audience-focused research. Such an approach requires more than simply analyzing two-way communication between an organization and its publics; it requires understanding how different publics interact (Luoma-aho, 2015). Pasadeos, Berger, and Renfro (2010) emphasized the need for PR to focus more on the stakeholder and audience of a message as constructs because, with modern technology, the audience is more than just a passive recipient of PR; it is an entity that communicates freely and openly with the organization and with other stakeholders or publics.

In light of this shift, it has been suggested that PR should move away from a management perspective and instead focus on social context (Ihlen & Verhoeven, 2012). This view was echoed by Edwards and Hodges (2011), who suggested that PR researchers should focus on the processes and outcomes of PR activities from a social perspective. In a social theory view of PR, the social reality of the organization and its stakeholders is a dynamic process of discursive patterns and influences, where the meaning of a communication is co-created (Bentele, 1997; Botan & Taylor, 2004; Fitch & L'Etang, 2017). Hence, constructing meaning is a shared activity (Bentele & Ruhl, 1993).

Researchers stressed that it remained necessary to focus on both the consequences and effectiveness of PR (Rakow & Nastasia, 2009). Waeraas (2009) suggested that legitimacy and legitimation through social acceptance (explained later in the literature review) were the heart of PR, as they allow an organization to gain and preserve popular support. Ihlen and van Ruler (2009) singled out trust-building and legitimacy either as an end in itself or as a means to realizing organizational goals. Ihlen and van Ruler (2009) proposed that a social theory view of PR was about “developing (or destroying) a company’s legitimacy or ‘license’ to operate in its community” (p. 1).

This an approach to PR is copacetic with dialogic theory. In dialogism, reality-construction and sense-making are cognitive and relational processes that focus on language and reasoning. Thus, social reality is a discursive product (Giddens, 1984; Stokowski, 2002), which includes relational and experienced interaction as part of its sense-making process (Shotter & Katz, 1999).

The central construct essential to the five tenants of dialogic theory (mutuality, propinquity, empathy, risk, and commitment) is the relationship basis of communication (Kent & Taylor, 2002). Mutuality is vital to the dialogic process, especially in terms of the organizational structure and attitude required for the public good and for the achievement and maintenance of PR goals in the communication process. Propinquity advocates for rhetorical exchanges — particularly exchanges happening in the present — that are engaging. Empathy consists of communal orientation, acknowledgment, and support. Risk acknowledges the potential for dialogue to produce unpredictable and dangerous outcomes. Commitment represents the organization's genuineness and understanding of the conversation. The second, third, and fourth tenets note that communication should be spontaneous and transpire on the public's terms. Dialogic communication requires an organizational commitment to listening and self-awareness (Kent & Taylor, 2002; Macnamara & Zerfass, 2012).

Lee, Gil de Zúñiga, Coleman, and Johnson (2014) stated that PR professionals' use of social media increased the symmetry — the two-way nature — of the co-creational communication stratum. Dialogic theory is one of the key strategies to enabling relationship-building on the Internet (McAllister-Spooner, 2008). Some researchers consider the Internet and social media as two of the best options for PR to foster co-creational communication (Kent & Taylor, 2016; Theunissen, 2014). Thus, dialogic theory was highly appropriate for this study, as it sought to understand the ways identity and image are co-created by the dialog between sport organizations and their stakeholders.

IM in PR has traditionally been viewed as a way for a company to project its desired image and identity outward onto a passively receptive stakeholder. In many ways, this is a detrimental approach to PR; it fosters the notion that PR IM could be essentially deceptive. Under traditional PR, an organization could seek to project an image that differed from reality, and stakeholders had limited ability to protest or share this misinformation about the organization. Now an organization must project an authentic image or risk massive backlash from its stakeholders through digital communications and the Internet (Tiaminen et al., 2015). This has created a contradiction between the literature and practice. Even as the literature recognizes the evolving nature of PR, many organizations fail to do so. Instead, they adhere to traditional PR paradigms (Thurlow & Yue, 2015).

When an organization adopts a co-creational, audience-based perspective, it may be difficult to manage communicated perceptions of image (Broom & Sha, 2013; Wilcox & Cameron, 2012). However, using a social theory lens of PR reveals that while organizations seek legitimacy, stakeholders confer legitimacy (Wehmeier, 2006). This leads to the supposition that PR, in a social context, requires stakeholder feedback and is co-creational (Taylor, 2010). PR-based IM stands as the negotiation of knowledge, meaning, and behaviour between an organization and its stakeholders (Ihlen & van Ruler, 2009). Thus, modern PR requires an organization to cede some control of its image to stakeholders through co-creation of image.

Sport Public Relations

Sport PR falls within the *services and sport* component of the strategic sport communication model (SSCM [Pedersen et al., 2017]). The model, shown in Appendix

B, was developed to provide an all-encompassing view for sport communication scholars and is divided into three components. It conceptualizes the nature of sport communication, the types of communication it uses, and the various settings in which communication occurs within sport. The first component of the model encompasses the types of communication that occur at the personal and organizational levels, which encompass inward communication, communication between individuals, and communication with internal and external publics. The second component of the SSCM represents the most developed academic field of sport communication (Pedersen, 2014), mediated communication. It includes the various mass and social media activities surrounding sport. The third component — sport communication, services, and support — represents departments of the organization that are commonly tasked with executing communication services and providing communication support. Examples include integrated marketing communication, sponsorship, crisis communication, community relations, and PR.

This research focuses on PR in particular. As previously noted, sport PR is a specialist area of PR practice that reveals insights into the role of PR in contemporary society (L'Etang, 2013b). Smith and Stewart's (1999/2010) list of 10 unique features of sport offered insights into the specialized needs required of PR in sport organizations. Sports have symbolic significance in performance outcomes, fan loyalty, and the celebration of achievement that occurs in few other areas of economic and social activity (Nicholson, Smith, Stewart, & Westerbeek, 2012). Sport PR is often required to manage the irrational passions and sense of social identity (emotional identification) as well as the nostalgia that sports create (Coombs & Osborne, 2012; Stoldt et al., 2012).

Mullin, Hardy, and Sutton (2014) emphasized that sports have a near-universal appeal, and they pervade almost all elements of life with a salience that leads many sport consumers to consider themselves industry-experts, vicariously celebrating the achievements of their favorite teams (BIRGing — “basking in reflected glory,” [Hunt, Bristol, & Bashaw, 1999; Stavros, Meng, Westberg, & Farrelly, 2014]) or distancing themselves from unsuccessful teams (CORFing — “cutting off reflected failure” [Snyder, Lassegard, & Ford, 1986]).

Media sociologists (e.g. Boyle, 2006; Wanta, 2013) have also produced insights into the relationships between media, media sources, and sports, but they tend to focus on traditional media relations rather than the broader aspects of the field of sport PR. Media sociologists have focused on the role of “beat” reporters in particular, who regularly cover a team and explore the interdependence between the sport entity and journalist (Bougeois, 1995; McEnnis, 2016; Rowe, 2003).

In North America, sport PR has been noted as both an occupational and academic specialism (Johnson, 1996; Favorito, 2013; Helitzer, 2001; Neupauer, 2001) as well as a specialist area of PR practice (L’Etang, 2013b). Pedersen’s (2013) edited collection, *Routledge Handbook of Sport Communication*, marked a major step forward in the development of the field (L’Etang, 2013b). Waters (2013) noted that little attention was paid to the topic of sport PR within the PR and sport management fields. Previous research in sport PR centered on functional aspects of PR theory, as illustrated by the two most used definitions of sport PR: “the process through which sport organizations can create and develop long-term mutually beneficial relationships with a range of publics” (Hopwood, 2005, p. 24) and the “managerial communication-based function designed to

identify a sport organization's key publics, evaluate its relationships with those publics, and foster desirable relationships between sport organizations and those publics" (Stoldt et al., 2012, p. 3). Both definitions leave the question of how sport PR is changing and evolving through the continuing development of social media.

From a context perspective, Sport PR research has mainly focused on the roles, responsibilities, and effectiveness of sport information services in college athletic departments in the United States, often using survey and interview methodologies (e.g. Pratt, 2013; Ruibley, Pratt, & Carpenter, 2016; Stoldt, Miller, & Comfort, 2001). Outside of college athletics, the primary method of scholarship has been through case studies. Relationship management and excellence theory have been used to study PR strategies in football (soccer); a case study of the Queensland Roar Football Club in Australia illustrated how PR could contribute to overall marketing and communications objectives (Hopwood, 2007). Coombs and Osborne (2012) used excellence theory to frame PR's role in creating positive perceptions of a new foreign owner at the Aston Villa Football Club in England, while García (2011) explored PR's role in relationship-building with fans at the Real Madrid Football Club in Spain.

Other case studies outside of football that use excellence or relationship-management often centered on a sport organization's engagement with the local community. Stoldt, Ratzlaff, and Remoet (2009) studied PR's role in advocacy for a sales tax to build a sport and entertainment facility; Mitrook, Parish, and Seltzer (2008) studied how the NBA's Orlando Magic engaged with activists and community groups to gain support for a new arena; and Yarbrough, Cameron, Sallot, and McWilliams (1998) examined the placement of Olympic qualifying events in politically charged

environments. Related sport PR studies, which focused on the digital aspect of organizational PR, examined the use of e-newsletters, websites, Twitter, and Facebook pages to cultivate fan relationships or increase participation levels in sport (e.g., Dittmore, Stoldt, & Greenwell, 2008; Walker, Kent, & Vincent, 2010; Waters, Burke, Jackson, & Buning, 2011). The popularity of case study research on sport PR made a case study methodology seem appropriate for this study.

Stakeholder engagement has become a greater focus of PR scholarship due to the introduction of social media, new forms of content media, and the engagement expectations of these new forms of communication (Avidar, 2013; Castells, 2013). Corporations today cannot operate alone; they are connected to complex multi-stakeholder networks in the organizational environment (Laczniak & Murphy, 2012; Parent, 2008). The value of stakeholder engagement lies in the understanding of dialogue dynamics and enabled participation (DuMars, Sitkiewicz, & Fogel, 2010). Scholars have also shown increased interest in how sport grants social benefits to stakeholders. Heinze, Soderstrom, and Zdroik (2014) used the examples of the NHL Green Program, which promoted ecologically sustainable practices, and the Fédération Internationale de Football Association's Football for Hope, which supported social development programs.

Many sport organizations' leaders believe they should be socially responsible because of public expectations of their organizations (Sheth & Babiak, 2010; Walker et al., 2010). Due to their visibility and dependence on the communities in which they operate, many sport organizations' leaders turn to community outreach activities to build goodwill and enhance their public image (Babiak & Trendafilova, 2011). Sheth and Babiak (2010) contended that further research was required to explore the relationships

between sports, brand image management, and corporate social responsibility (CSR), defined as a set of actions aimed to further some social good beyond the explicit pecuniary interests of a firm (Babiak & Trendafilova, 2011). While this study did not address CSR directly, it did consider the extent to which issues of organizational identity — which could include corporate social responsibility — affect organizational image and legitimacy in the social media world.

While a significant portion of PR in sport includes its traditional publicity-based role of interacting with media and athletes, it has also progressed to include greater management functions (Ruihley et al., 2016; Stoldt & Vermillion, 2013). These functions include corporate communications; establishing brand awareness, image, reputation, the demonstration of social responsibility; and communication with stakeholders, such as employees, customers, and investors (Hopwood et al., 2010; Pratt, 2013; Stoldt et al., 2012). The founding editor of *SportBusiness International*, Kevin Roberts, noted the changing environment facing sport PR due to the evolution of the global marketplace and the organizations themselves (as cited by L'Etang, 2013a).

Roberts (2012; as cited by L'Etang, 2013a) reported that the sport industry was becoming more sophisticated but lacked the mainstream business acumen that required complex PR pursuits, instead focusing on communication and media relations. He related that sport PR needed to be an all-encompassing integrated set of activities that included event promotion, brand-building, image and identity management, communication with stakeholders and sponsors, management of the press, and image crisis management. Image crises have become a considerably more common occurrence due to the firestorms that can easily erupt over a faux pas on social media such as Twitter.

Many sport organizations lack the integrated PR strategy advocated by Roberts (2012; as cited by L'Etang, 2013a) or a good understanding of PR's complex role in the organization (L'Etang, 2013b; Novitaria, 2017). Current literature rationalized this challenge within the PR industry as primarily due to the lack of consensus defining the boundaries of PR, its changing nature, or its theoretical underpinnings (Curtin, 2012; Fitch & L'Etang, 2017; Gregory & Thurlow, 2016; Novitaria, 2017).

Other contributing factors may include the differing roles of sport PR practitioners; they have moved from traditional roles as technicians involved in media relations activities (e.g., writing, photography, graphic design, and organizing interviews) to problem-solving process facilitators who aid in organizational strategy (Pratt, 2013; Ruibley et al., 2016; Ruibley & Fall, 2009). Many sport PR practitioners also fail to understand the linkages between PR and organizational goals (Stoldt, Miller, & Vermillion, 2009). This study sought to explore some of these issues through its explorations of how social media has directly and explicitly changed aspects of PR in sport organizations.

Industry-focused researchers have suggested that sport PR has evolved due to the proliferation of the Internet and social media platforms, increased media outlets, the commercialization of sport, and demands for greater measurement/business impact (Alfonsi, 2012; Ruibley et al., 2016; Stoldt et al., 2012). Alfonsi (2012) proposed that sport PR practitioners must integrate three new roles into their portfolio: digital experts, business environment trend spotters, and strategic counselors. In a strategic counseling role, PR can offer advice across a range of business challenges. For example, The Taylor Group conducted a strategic assessment of the entire motorsport industry to help

NASCAR frame a vision of its future that countered declining attendance and media discussion about the relevance of the sport to fans and sponsors (Alfonsi, 2012). In a trend-spotting role, PR provides a deep, current understanding of societal trends influencing consumer behaviour by studying an organization's interactions with publics (Alfonsi, 2012). As digital experts, sport organizations require PR professionals to provide content and guidance in navigating the social media landscape and the resulting interactions with stakeholders (Alfonsi, 2012).

Based on PR and sport PR literature to date, more studies regarding audience-based research should be explored. This study filled that gap by looking at sport PR from the organizational and stakeholder perspectives. As IM in PR scholarship has become an increasingly important means of expressing influence in online communication (Nekmat et al., 2014), organizational image from an audience-based perspective has become a key concept in PR.

Current image-based literature related to sport PR centres on Benoit's (1995) crisis-based image repair theory (e.g., Brown, Dickhaus, & Long, 2012; Walsh & McAllister-Spooner, 2011), with little attention directed toward identity despite strong links (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991; Gioia et al., 2013; Parent & Foreman, 2007; Scott & Lane, 2000). This is evident in the generalized case of academic PR literature (Nekmat et al., 2014).

Sport PR faces unique challenges because of the nature of the sport industry. While the sport context's social identification tendencies and dependence on publicity are not unique in themselves, they require a nuanced approach due to the political and social contexts in which PR skills are applied (L'Etang, 2013b). However, PR literature is

underdeveloped in the sport field. This raises the question of whether sport industry scholarship in PR has sufficiently employed theoretical approaches in the broader fields of management, organizational studies, and communication to adapt to the changing needs of the social media world. As suggested by Nekmat and her colleagues (2014), IM research is becoming increasingly important to PR in a social media environment and requires an understanding of the broader field of organizational IM.

Organizational Perception Management

Perceptions provide an important frame of reference in determining how individuals understand and respond to organizational messages (Bhattacharya, Rao, & Glynn, 1995). It is helpful to understand the broad concept of organizational perception management as proposed by Elsbach (2003) before broaching the subject of organizational image, identity, and legitimacy (Appendix C). Elsbach defined organizational perception management as the actions taken by an organization to influence audience perceptions of an organization as an entity or whole. Such perceptions included image (stakeholders' short-lived and specific perceptions of the organization); reputation (external stakeholders' enduring status categorization of the quality of the organization); and identity (internal stakeholders' enduring perceptions of the organization). Elsbach noted that, for any given organization, all three kinds of perceptions are likely to exist simultaneously.

Because organizations are confronted by increased formal and informal certification requirements, from meeting accounting standards to fulfilling social norms, Elsbach suggested that legitimacy should be included in the strategic considerations of organizational perception management, a view echoed by a social theory approach to PR.

These strategic considerations are reflected when organizations undertake symbolic actions to manage their perceptions. The recipients of such symbolic actions are the audience members themselves and include everyone who is a target of organizational perception management. These audiences might consist of external stakeholders, such as members of other organizations (e.g., regulatory agencies, competing organizations, suppliers), public interest groups (e.g., consumers, environmental activists, voters), and the general public, as well as persons inside the organization, such as employees, stockholders, volunteers, or dues-paying members.

Elsbach's (2003) framework illustrates that organizational image, impression, identity, perception, legitimacy, and reputation are closely intertwined and represent a complex set of organizational expressions (Gioia et al., 2014; King & Whetten, 2008; Massey, 2003). However, numerous scholars have lamented the inconsistent use of the terms image, identity, impression, legitimacy, and reputation in organizational literature (Barnett et al., 2006; Brown, Dacin, Pratt, & Whetten, 2006; King & Whetten, 2008). Some scholars have noted the use of the term reputation in reference to both image (Carroll, 2008) and legitimacy-seeking behaviour (Cian & Cervai, 2014). For example, Park and Berger (2004) equated image with reputation, describing it as "the impression of a person, company, or institution that is held by one or more publics" (p.364), while Fobrum (1996) stated that coherent and consistent images help shape reputation.

Legitimacy and reputation also have much in common, including the importance of cultural factors, the use of symbolic social signals, and the garnering of resources by appearing to conform to social norms (Deephouse & Suchman, 2008), but the two concepts are not the same. Legitimacy is fundamentally non-rival; it involves judging

organizations based on their conformity to social norms and expectations rather than other organizations. Reputation, however, involves stakeholders comparing organizations of the same status classification within an industry (Bitektine, 2011; Deephouse & Suchman, 2008). Thus, reputation judgments necessitate the existence of two or more organizations, while legitimacy judgments need only a single organization to compare against social norms (Deephouse & Suchman, 2008). For example, in their study of banks, Deephouse and Carter (2005) found that while improved financial performance increased reputation vis-à-vis its competitors, it did not increase legitimacy. This can be seen in the strategic considerations portion of Elsbach's (2003) framework.

Another example of inconsistent usage of terms can be found in the co-use of the terms image and impression. Impressions are self-presentations, and impression management refers to the process by which people attempt to influence the image others have of them (Rosenfeld, Giacalone, & Riordan, 1995). Impression management can also be applied at the macro-organizational level to study ways in which organizations manage their image to stakeholders (Bolino, Kacmar, Turnley, & Gilstrap, 2008; Pratt, 2013). While this concept holds many similarities to organizational IM (e.g., interactions with stakeholders, the process of managing image, construed image, and identity), the two are distinct. Impression management concerns itself with projecting a desirable image based on stakeholder feedback and thus implicitly acknowledges a difference between identity and image (Cornelissen et al., 2007; He & Balmer, 2007). With impression management, an organization might seek to negotiate an image of its identity with stakeholders (Scott & Lane, 2000) that differs from its authentic and transparent expressions of identity (Taiminen et al., 2015). In such cases, researchers suggest that

stakeholders might view impression management as dishonest (Taiminen et al., 2015), spin-doctoring (L'Etang, 2013a), an attempt to circumvent critical thinking (Coombs & Holladay, 2013), or manipulation of public discourse and the media (Coombs & Holladay, 2013).

The concept of organizational impression management is similar to that of corporate identity and corporate image. Some scholars (e.g., Alvesson, 1990; Balmer & Greyson, 2003; Cornelissen et al., 2007) have viewed corporate identity as the image that an organization wants to communicate to constituents, though this image may not always correspond with reality. Thus, impression management and corporate level identity and image concepts represent one of the failings of the traditional PR model, because it suggests that organizations can control their image in the hands of stakeholders.

Despite various attempts at clarification and suggestions for a universal nomenclature, scholars continue to use image-related terms interchangeably and even in contradictory ways (Barnett et al., 2006; Cian & Cervai, 2014; Gilpin, 2010). To avoid confusion, this study used a set of definitions for its key terms that were established in chapter one (pages 6-7) and summarized in Figure 1.1. However, the ambiguity in terminology has made it difficult to follow a threaded conversation within image-related research, especially across disciplines (Brown et al., 2006; Cian & Cervai, 2014; Nekmat et al., 2014). Still, regardless of the terminology used, an organization can benefit from aligning its perception of itself with how others perceive it (Huang-Horwitz & Freberg, 2016). Thus, the remainder of this literature review will present the relationships of identity, image, and legitimacy from both an organizational and stakeholder audience perspective. It will conclude with an assessment of the interrelationships of the three

concepts and the implications of social media. These concepts are central to the study and its purpose.

Organizational Identity

Identity research originates in several disciplines, notably organizational behaviour, marketing, communication, and strategic management (Moingeon & Soenen, 2002). In their seminal article on identity, Albert and Whetten (1985) wrote, “Historically, identity has been treated as a loosely coupled set of ideas, distinctions, puzzles, and concepts that are best considered as a framework or point of view” (p. 264). Ten years later, in his review of identity literature, van Riel (1995) noted, “One must, unfortunately, accept that at a conceptual level, there is no ambiguous, generally accepted definition of identity” (p. 72). This confusion continues today. Olin (2017) states that “much of the terminology and concepts used within and round identity activity is loose and sloppy” (p. 6)

Despite this confusion, there are two historically separate traditions in dealing with identity as it relates to organizations. The first is organizational identity, which has roots in organizational theory and analysis (Moingeon & Soenen, 2002). The second is corporate identity, which has a background in marketing (Balmer & Grayson, 2003). In corporate identity scholarship, identity is viewed as a set of more-or-less tangible manifestations that are somewhat controllable (Olins, 1989; van Riel & Balmer, 1997). Corporate identity scholars offer a prescriptive definition in which an organization’s identity involves all of the enterprises’ displays of its identity, including corporate image and corporate communications, as part of the “corporate identity mix,” sometimes referred to as “corporate personality” (Moingeon & Soenen, 2002). In this approach, the

organization differentiates itself from other organizations by projecting and managing multiple identities to various stakeholders (Moingeon & Soenen, 2002). This view uses a functionalist approach, where identity is an enduring social fact (Gioia, 1998).

On the other hand, organizational identity lends itself to the interpretivist and social construction approach used in this study. In this approach, identity is socially constructed (Gioia, 1998). From this viewpoint, identity cannot be directly managed by the organization alone (Moingeon & Soenen, 2002), a view compatible with a social theory PR approach (Ihlen & Verhoeven, 2012). This view lends itself to a social media world that faces a convergent digital environment with a wide range of linkages between contemporary media platforms (Meikle & Young, 2011).

Organizational identity is the set of self-definitions that organizations use to answer the question, "Who are we as an organization?" (Albert & Whetten, 1985). It has traditionally focused on the beliefs held by organizational leaders about their organizations and how their influence leads to an entrenched sense of an organization's core values and practices (Gioia, Price, Hamilton, & Thomas, 2010; Nag, Corley, & Gioia, 2007). It was perceived as a fairly stable concept based on the assumption that some form of "essential" identity persisted as a self-perception at the deepest level of organization members' beliefs and cultural understandings (Gioia et al., 2010; Schein, 1990).

By extension, identity messages are claims that an organization makes and communicates to its key stakeholders about itself (Huang-Horowitz & Freberg, 2016). In their seminal work on image management, Schultz, Hatch, and Larsen (2000) noted that the expression of organizational identity through communicated messages to stakeholders

served as a projection of what makes the organization different from other organizations. Identity images can include messages that describe "who we are," "what we do," "how we do what we do," "why we do what we do," and "how we are distinct from other similar organizations," (Huang-Horowitz & Freberg, 2016).

Literature also denotes that identity is the organization's character or self-image and is a concept used to explain organizational action (Gioia et al., 2013). When viewing identity through a social construction lens, as this research does, it holds that organizational identity remains a self-referential concept defined by members of the organization (Gioia et al., 2000). This allows organizations to be conceptualized as social actors in their operating environment, a view copacetic with the social theory approach to PR used in this research.

Albert and Whetten (1985) proposed that organizational identity has three pillars: central, enduring, and distinctive. Gioia et al. (2013), who reviewed organizational identity research in terms of those three pillars, noted that while the term central was becoming more difficult to define, it remained an anchor for organizational identity. Distinctiveness continued to be defined as the ways in which organizations see themselves as being similar to a desirable reference group, such as a market category or industry, while retaining elements that distinguish them from that group, creating a possible competitive advantage (Corley et al., 2006; Gioia et al., 2013). The enduring pillar provides the basis discerning a disagreement in identity studies: one portraying identity as static and the other portraying identity as dynamic, with change occurring over much shorter periods of time (Gioia et al., 2013). However, this debate has been resolved

by a substantial body of work that shows identity changes over shorter time periods than originally thought, if only in subtle ways (Gioia et al., 2013).

From a social construction perspective, internal stakeholders perceive identity as stable, even when it is changing. This is often why they use the same labels to describe their identity even as the meaning of those labels changes without their tacit knowledge. This is why identity can appear stable even as it changes (Gioia et al., 2000). This leads to the appearance of a stable identity even as it evolves (Gioia et al., 2000). Gioia et al. (2013) suggested it was more appropriate to say that identity is continuous rather than enduring. This has led some scholars to theorize identity as a dynamic process (Schultz, Maguire, Langley, & Tsoukas, 2012), similar to the more transient concept of image (Gioia et al., 2014). This is important because organizational images come from the organization's identity and are projected (actively or passively) to external stakeholders. Now organizational identity can be viewed as an ongoing work in progress where internal stakeholders project images to external stakeholders, who then receive and interpret those images before reflecting them back to the organization (Gioia et al., 2014).

Authenticity is a growing theme in PR research in a social media world (Taiminen et al., 2015); MacIntosh and Doherty (2007), Robinson (2013), and Pronschinske et al. (2012) noted that as the cultures of sport and recreation organizations become increasingly transparent, external perceptions of their core values become more important to their success. For this research, identity is defined by members of the organization (Gioia, Schultz, & Corley, 2000) but negotiated with external stakeholders, and it is used to explain organizational action (Gioia, Patvardhan, Hamilton, & Corley, 2013; Scott & Lane, 2000). In this definition, image functions as a destabilizing force on identity,

"frequently requiring members to revisit and reconstruct their organizational sense of self" (Gioia et al., 2000, p. 67).

Organizational Image

In management studies, organizational image has been conceived as a broad concept (Gioia et al., 2014). From a societal view, images are dissected and included in the perceptions of an organization's legitimacy, correctness, status, distinction, consistency, and trustworthiness (Elsbach, 2003). Organizational image has also been variously described as an insider's perception of how outsiders view the organization (Dhalla, 2007; Dutton & Dukerich, 1991), the projected veneer of an organization (Bromley, 2000), stakeholder perceptions' of an organization (Fombrun & van Riel, 1997; Illia & Greyser, 2013; Illia & Lurati, 2006), and as an umbrella term encompassing all reputational aspects of an organization (Wartick, 2002). Irrespective of the terminology used, organizational image represents a complex set of intertwined expressions and assessments by internal and external stakeholders, which partly help determine the perceived legitimacy and distinctiveness of the organization (King & Whetten, 2008; Lock et al., 2015; Massey, 2003). Organizational images provide "relatively current and temporary perceptions" that show what individuals (both internal and external) know about an entity (Elsbach, 2003, p. 300). Thus, image is the etic or outsider view of identity, representing the organization as seen by those not currently part of it. An organization can have more than one image, as it is a holistic representation of the various traits and behaviours that characterize an organization's identity (Albert & Whetten, 1985; Ashforth & Mael, 1996). It is the outward, authentic expression of

organizational identity (actively or passively), appealing to the interests of external stakeholders (Lamertz et al., 2008; Scott & Lane, 2000; Taiminen et al., 2015).

This definition can also refer to an organization's *desired* image. Because image perception is etic, the image projected by internal members of the organization may not match the image perceived by those outside the organization. Based on this distinction, organizational image has been demarcated into two types of image: construed image, which is how members of an organization believe external stakeholders see them (Gioia et al., 2014; Scott & Lane, 2000), and desired or projected external image, which is how internal stakeholders aspire to view themselves in the present or future, helping them act in service of the organization's future well-being (Gioia et al., 2014).

Organizational images are an important concept in sport and have been applied to various organizational strategies, such as gaining support for referendums on public stadium funding (Kellison & Mondello, 2012), professional team brand management (Agyemang & Williams, 2013), organizational value creation through the enhancement of brand equity and decision-making (Ferrand & Pages, 1999), organizational presentation to consumers by staff (Brandon-Lai et al., 2016), effective corporate social responsibility (Sartore-Baldwin & Walker, 2011), evaluating sponsor fit (Close & Lacey, 2013), the management of large-scale sport events (Heslop, Nadeau, O'Reilly, & Armenakyan, 2013; Parent & Foreman, 2007), and in the sport PR function itself (Pratt, 2013).

While there are parallels between work exploring images of sport brands and sponsorships (Ferrand & Pages, 1999; Filo, Funk, & O'Brien, 2010; Filo, Lock, & Karg, 2015; Michaelidou, Micevski, & Cadogan, 2015), with some sport marketers viewing

their organization as a brand in need of management (e.g., Gladden & Funk, 2002; Schade et al., 2014), from a social theory PR perspective, image is viewed from the broader context of the organization itself (Ihlen & Verhoeven, 2012). Such a broad approach to image in sport has also been used by Lock et al. (2015) and Pratt (2013).

This differs from branding studies, which limits the focus to below the macro (organizational) level, focusing on certain brand attributes and benefits relating to an organization's products and services, rather than seeking organizational legitimacy (Brown & Dacin, 1997; Gladden & Funk, 2002; Ihlen & Verhoeven, 2012; Walsh, Rhenwrick, Williams, & Waldburger, 2014).

While brand studies are not directly related to this study, it is important to understand brand studies for the sake of comparison. Brand management refers to the organization and management of a brand, a set of products marketed under a single name and icon to consumers (Agyemang & Williams, 2013). This differs from the broader organizational perspective that is required when viewing image through a social theory perspective of PR. However, brand and corporate image scholarship offered some key insights into the perspective offered by Gioia and his colleagues (2014), specifically that organizational image is no longer grounded in identity, as originally proposed by Balmer and Greyser (2001), Whetten and MacKay (2002), and others.

Instead, Gioia et al. (2014) proposed that image drives identity, pointing to recent brand-related research that suggests a different view of image, one of brand co-creation that explores more substantive ways of connecting products with their primary customers. Merz, He, and Vargo (2009) observed a shift in branding studies "from the brand image as the primary driver of brand value to the customer as a significant actor in the brand

value creation process'' (p. 334). The idea of co-creation took root in the 2000s, when two transitions occurred (Mertz et al., 2009). The first came when focus shifted from the notion of customers as buyers to customers as bona fide stakeholders engaged in mutually creating brands through social interactions with organizations (Iansiti & Levien, 2004). The second transition occurred with the development of social networks and brand communities of customers with shared rituals centered on the brand, though the customers do not always own the products themselves. These networks were aided by social media, creating a platform for interaction and information sharing (Christodoulides, 2008; Gregory, 2007).

The notion of organizations involving their key stakeholders in brand co-creation suggests a revised understanding of overall organization-level IM, that images are not simply to be merely measured, mapped, or manipulated through impression management to suit the organization's preferred reality but are instead used to inform, guide, and shape organizational reality itself (Gioia et al., 2014). Therefore, image is now the symbolic representation of organizational identity as negotiated with the organization's stakeholders, and it can transform identity through negotiation and co-creation with external stakeholders.

Co-Creational Image Management: Connecting Image and Identity

This dynamic view of identity and image resonates with a social theory approach to PR, as identity emerges from the shared co-creation of a perspective-based understanding, leading to co-creational IM, where image is co-created by an organization and its stakeholders or created by the two groups acting together. It also helps explain the

strong relationship between organizational identity and image (Dutton, Dukerich, & Harquail, 1994; Gioia et al., 2014).

In a comprehensive review of related business and marketing literature, Haedrich (1993) highlighted the importance of IM research for PR. The author argued that PR should spend more time establishing and maintaining a good image. He also suggested that organizational image is dominated by stakeholder involvement and perception, individually or in groups, and that dialogue is an effective strategy to meet and exceed stakeholder expectations based on IM. This insight proved prescient, as many at the time viewed PR as the act of persuading rather than engaging in dialogue. Just over a decade later, the landscape of PR began to shift towards a world where social media and the Internet make one-sided persuasion almost impossible.

Elsbach (2003) argued that an organization's image was perceived by internal (i.e., employees) and external audiences (i.e., the broader marketplace). Thus, the malleability of organizational identity can be seen in the fluidity of organizational images, as the organization responds to changes in its environment to gain acceptance from its audiences (Gioia & Thomas, 1996; Hatch & Schultz, 2002; Ravasi & Schultz, 2006). For example, McDonald's was perceived as a low-brow, unhealthy restaurant chain in the 1990s, and the management at McDonald's responded by expanding their menu to offer salads and other healthy choices, even creating a new brand of gourmet products under the McCafé label (Jones, 2014). While inexpensive fast food is still part of the McDonald's identity, the expression of that identity changed in response to negative feedback.

While Scott and Lane (2000) suggested that identity is now defined by organization members and external stakeholders, Gioia et al. (2014) postulated that image drives and transforms identity. This is partially because stakeholders can now engage in two-way interactive, synchronous, and direct one-to-many communication through social media (Gilpin, 2010; Kelleher, 2007). In some ways, modern communication technologies make it easy for these perceptions to be shared. Peer-to-peer communication functionally serves as a secondary image-creation process independent of the organization's influence. Stakeholder groups may hold different image perceptions of the same organization, and they may communicate their perceptions through different platforms (Luoma-aho & Vos, 2010; Rui & Stefanone, 2013). Rindova (1999) called these refracted images, as they often represent altered interpretations of the initial images projected by organizations. Such interactions have created organizational challenges in deliberate image construction due to an increasing need for organizations to negotiate their image with various stakeholder groups.

In this new and unpredictable environment, organizations must prepare for opposition while looking for stakeholder support (McDonald & Cokley, 2013). When the Toronto Maple Leafs were owned by the Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan, their fans worried that profits to shareholders were seen as more important than the team's on-ice product and commitment to their community. To address these issues, the Toronto Maple Leafs formally established a community foundation and signed expensive veteran players, a move publicized through traditional and digital communication platforms. These actions helped alleviate public perception of the team's ownership (J. Lashway, personal communication, August 20, 2017). Without the modern ease of communication,

the team's ownership might not have felt the need to respond to these concerns.

Traditional PR methods suggest that such concerns would remain isolated when left alone, but the Internet and social media allow disgruntled fans to publicly express their grievances.

This back-and-forth gives key outsiders the power to influence the essence of the organization (Gioia et al., 2014; Taiminen et al., 2015). Evidence suggests that organizations no longer manage images in a digital environment; instead, digital image comes from direct or indirect communication with stakeholders (Gilpin, 2010). In other words, digital PR professionals now cultivate rather than manage relationships in an ongoing communication process that seeks to influence image stakeholders (Grunig, 2013), who project their own refracted image of the organization through their own communication network (Nekmat et al., 2014; Taiminen et al., 2015).

Internet and open social media platforms such as Twitter are shifting power dynamics away from organizations, making the debates between business and society more complex (Castello, Etter, & Nielsen, 2016). With the press of a button, one person can voice their concerns about corporate practices alongside many others (Barnett, Henriques, & Husted, 2018). Some have argued that this increased information sharing has caused cognitive overload by flooding social media with so many messages that less information can be noticed and acted upon (Bawden & Robinson, 2009; Flaxman, Goel, & Rao, 2016). It has also been suggested that when information is noticed, stakeholders rely on heuristics to process the large amounts of data, rather than rationalize and scrutinize their beliefs based on new information (Barnett et al., 2018). Barnett and his colleagues postulated that such actions may serve to reduce dialogic activity on social

media, and stakeholders will feel less motivated to change their views of an organization. This suggests that social media limits rather than facilitates dialogue and therefore stakeholder influence over the organization (Barnett et al., 2018).

Some have argued differently (e.g., Hemp, 2009; O'Hallarn, Shapiro, Wittkower, Ridinger, & Hambrick, 2018; Pentina & Tarafdar, 2014). Computerized tools, such as email-prioritizing software that determines the sender and importance of a message, have been used to combat this information overload (Hemp, 2009). On social media, the platforms allow individual stakeholders to choose who they communicate with and “pull” relevant information (Pentina & Tarafdar, 2014). This makes social media a tool that can be used to gather and select information valuable to individual stakeholders (Pentina & Tarafdar, 2014). Hashtags aid this process (O'Hallarn et al., 2018). Therefore, social media can act as a human-mediated system that processes the selection of information, reduces information overload, and fosters dialogic communication with other like-minded individuals (Denning, 2006; Pentina & Tarafdar, 2014).

The variety of perspectives on social media and engagement can be explained by the many ways it is used in relation to perspectives on organizations. Social media may contribute to cognitive overload if it is used passively as a communication platform that simply distributes unsolicited information. However, social media users who purposefully engage in selection-processing of the data they receive reduce the potential for cognitive overload (Taylor, Pentina, & Tarafdar, 2017).

The aforementioned notion that image is used wittingly or unwittingly to drive identity is illustrated by Gioia et al.'s (2014) process model of identity-image independence (Appendix D). In the model, external images (construed and desired)

become the means through which substantive identity, understood in a fashion similar to that of substantive evidence, is eventually defined (Gioia et al., 2014). Gioia and his colleagues theorized that a reflexive comparison between self-reflection and other-reflection could bring identity into alignment with its construed external image. Thus, identity might not always come from a consideration of “who we are” and “who we want to be.” Rather, identity change could also result from two external image considerations: “how we think they see us” and “how we want them to see us.”

This concept has significant implications for IM and provides the framework for image co-creation. Although image construction originates in organizations and their identity constructs (Gioia et al., 2013; Parent & Foreman, 2007), it can be said to be co-creational, as external forces make image construction an inherently social process; the organization responds to feedback or changes in the stakeholder environment (Gilpin, 2010; Gioia et al., 2013; Gioia et al., 2014; Parent and Foreman, 2007). Thus, a co-created organizational IM is the product of continuing discourses between organizations and stakeholders. It does not come from the traditional instrumental transmission-based approach that prepossesses one-way communication or projections of identity and desired images into the minds of intended audiences (Massey, 2003; Nekmat et al., 2014).

Effective IM requires organizations to understand stakeholders’ perceptions and how they affect image. The gap between an organization’s current identity and their desired identity was termed an identity gap by Reger, Gustafson, Demarie, and Mullane (1994). The identity gap is an impetus for identity change, which Gioia and Thomas (1996) characterized as striving for a preferred alternative image. Using a PR social approach to IM, it can be postulated that the pursuit of legitimacy spurs image change,

which often requires a change in identity (Glynn & Marquis, 2005). In addition, image-related PR activities may also become a legitimization strategy for a specific action (Boyd, 2000). When a company does something controversial, they may try to gain support by appealing to the trustworthy image they used to have, as when the NFL's Dallas Cowboys signed defensive end Greg Hardy to a contract in 2015 despite allegations that he assaulted his girlfriend. Conversely, a company with a negative public image may try to distance itself from said image to garner support for a new course of action (Boyd, 2000).

In summary, image and identity are necessarily interrelated, because image is the outward expression of identity. Today, transparency is increasingly expected or even mandated, and increases in transparency bring image closer to identity. Transparency means an organization cannot easily ignore parts of its identity when creating an image, nor can it misrepresent its identity through impression management.

Because IM is a co-creational process facilitated through the Internet and social media, an organization cannot decide its image by itself, as the projection of image now comes from stakeholders too. This means that stakeholder perceptions have the power to alter an organization's identity, such as in the case of McDonald's. However, changes in organizational identity are complex. When Gioia et al. (2014) formulated a model of how image drives identity (Appendix D), they refined Scott and Lane's (2000) assertion that identity is no longer defined by the organization alone.

Organizational Legitimacy

Organizational legitimacy is the socially acceptable behaviour of an organization that is consistent with societally defined values and norms (Suchman, 1995), and securing

this legitimacy is a high priority for modern organizations. However, organizations and corporations have not always sought public legitimization (Boyd, 2000). Cutlip (1994) argued that investigative journalists of the early 20th century, who portrayed corporations as demons, forced businesses to counteract the negative publicity of unsanitary labor conditions and product liabilities. As posited by one of the founding fathers of PR, Ivy Lee, organizations cannot sustain themselves without considering what the public thinks (as cited in Hiebert, 1966). In other words, legitimacy insulates the organization from external pressures (Scott & Lyman, 1968).

In a social view of PR, legitimacy is an important concept (Ihlen & Verhoeven, 2012). Suchman (1995) advocated a broad definition of organizational legitimacy, provided above. He identified three main types of organizational legitimacy: cognitive legitimacy, pragmatic legitimacy, and moral legitimacy. Organizations attain cognitive legitimacy by conforming to established models of form and function (Suchman, 1995). These models have become so deeply assimilated into culture and society that the public takes them for granted. They do not require evaluations, and stakeholders no longer question the motives behind an organization's actions (Aldrich & Fiol, 1994; Berger & Luckmann, 1967). For example, the National Football League's secondary ticket market obtained legitimacy when it reclassified itself through partnerships with legitimate primary ticketing providers, such as Ticketmaster (Drayer & Martin, 2010).

Pragmatic and moral legitimacy require evaluations that necessitate more cognitive effort on behalf of the stakeholder, as they involve scrutiny of practices (and practice benefits) beyond established norms of the organization (Bitektine, 2011; Lock et al., 2015). Pragmatic legitimacy involves not violating the expectations of specific

stakeholder groups, even when the broader public does not share these expectations.

When sport organizations hold special team events for season ticket holders, who expect a higher level of service than other stakeholders, they are seeking pragmatic legitimacy (George & Wakefield, 2018). Moral legitimacy refers to perceptions of congruence between aspects of organizational performance and societal expectations for moral conduct appropriate to the specific organization (Bitektine, 2011).

An organization's activity can present multiple benefits or hazards with different stakeholders (Ruef & Scott, 1998; Suchman, 1995). Bitektine (2011) articulated that these benefits or hazards can be described as perceived organizational dimensions that stakeholders accept or deny based on the organization's structure and actions compared to social norms and regulations. He called these evaluations sociopolitical judgments. Bitektine (2011) used the term legitimacy dimensions to describe the perceived actions, structures, or outcomes that are subject to sociopolitical evaluations when stakeholders make legitimacy judgments about the organization (Bitektine, 2011).

Bitektine also split the sociopolitical process of legitimacy evaluation into pragmatic and moral paths, dependent on audience (stakeholder) perceptions of the benefits diffused by an organizational action (Appendix E). The framework illustrates the process by which stakeholders evaluate the legitimacy of organizations. Bitektine (2011) argued that legitimacy judgments stem from how stakeholders perceive specific organizational action; the perceptions then form evaluations. The actions scrutinized by stakeholders are categorized based on different types of legitimacy: procedural, structural, consequential, personal, linkage, managerial, or technical (Bitektine, 2011; Suchman, 1995), all of which are outlined in Appendix F.

Procedural legitimacy is evaluated based on an organization's action in relation to social and cultural norms. Structural legitimacy is based on the structure of the organization as well as its reoccurring features. Consequential legitimacy determines how the actions of an organization benefit its community or industry, while personal legitimacy is based on the actions and charisma of those belonging to the organization. Linkage legitimacy refers to the organization's relationship with other legitimate actors in its social environment. Managerial legitimacy is based on evaluations of organizational performance, and technical legitimacy refers to judgments of qualifications and services.

These actions are processed by stakeholders either cognitively or sociopolitically. Both processes examine the extent to which the organization's actions align with accepted institutionalized practices to obtain, maintain, or repair legitimacy within organizational fields or classifications (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Tolbert & Zucker, 1996). The analytic processing stage therefore involves stakeholders classifying organizations to make sense of their actions. This allows stakeholders to judge organizational actions against a set of myths or perceived standards that apply to all organizations in that classification (Soebbing & Mason, 2009; Suchman, 1995; Washington & Patterson, 2011).

In their study of a non-profit community sport organization in Sydney, Australia, Lock et al. (2015) used Bitektine's conceptual framework to capture perceptions of organizational legitimacy (CPOL). Their survey identified six dimensions of legitimacy and classified them by typology. They then used a quantitative questionnaire to test and measure the six dimensions that emerged.

In later work, Bitektine and Haack (2015) noted that individual legitimacy judgments could be influenced at the macro level by what they termed judgment validation institutions, consisting of media, regulators, and the legal system. Their framework was a multi-level perspective of legitimacy in which they argued that, through the process of institutionalization, evaluators' legitimacy judgments were subjected to social control through an institutional stability loop. The loop begins with an organization's observable properties and behaviours, which are then judged at the micro level by individuals through perceptions. These judgments are affected by judgment validation institutions, who help establish perceived norms and exert conformity pressure. The individual may then choose to act based on their judgment, which may affect organizational performance. Each perceived legitimacy dimension is context-specific to each stakeholder and subject to different analytical processing, which results in different forms of judgments that can be rendered with respect to the organization.

In a social media context, members of the online community, or what Etter, Colleoni, Illia, Meggiorin, and D'Eugenio (2017) called "citizens in social media" (p. 20), also became judgment validation institutions by creating community norms from affect-based responses, such as joy (positive affect) or disappointment (negative affect). Bitektine's concept of legitimacy dimensions — the images of perceived actions, structures, or outcomes that are important to stakeholders and therefore subject to sociopolitical evaluations — is similar to social judgment theory. Social judgment theory, proposed by Muzafer Sherif and Carl Hovland in 1961, focuses on the internal processes of a person's own judgment of a communicated message. It suggests that a person's current attitude affects the way they perceive and evaluate ideas (Brehmer, 1988).

Individuals weigh every new idea based on their current judgmental beliefs and their recent interactions with others (Chau, Wong, Chow, & Fung, 2014). Social judgment theory seeks to understand the things individuals find important, the conditions under which a person's attitude (judgment) can change, and the way it changes (Brehmer, 1988).

Legitimacy judgments are critical in determining the overall legitimacy of the organization (Bitektine, 2011) and can provide an empirical measurement of IM as both a process and an outcome (Lock et al., 2015), a measurement lacking in current PR image literature (Nekmat et al., 2014). The process of establishing legitimacy is subject to change over time (Deephouse & Suchman, 2008). Research has conventionally assumed a linear continuum process of legitimization, with organizations first seeking pragmatic or moral legitimacy and eventually finding cognitive legitimacy, where legitimacy is accepted or institutionalized (Greenwood, Suddaby, & Hinings, 2002; Johnson, Dowd, & Ridgeway, 2006; Tolbert & Zucker, 1996). However, researchers have recently suggested that the legitimization process was more iterative in practice, and the use of pragmatic or moral legitimacy was fragmented and could vary depending on context and circumstance (Laïfi & Josserand, 2016), a finding consistent with the underpinnings of a co-creational approach to IM. Researchers termed this bricolage. They viewed the legitimization process as opportunistic bricolage, where organizations sought legitimacy with individual stakeholders through trial and error (Laïfi & Josserand, 2016). This view remained consistent with Bitektine's (2011) conceptualization of legitimacy judgments.

Deephouse and Suchman (2008) noted that because legitimacy was assessed by multiple audiences examining multiple activities, an organization could increase its

legitimacy by becoming more legitimate to more stakeholders in more of its activities. From a PR stance, legitimacy judgments that require difficult sociopolitical evaluations can become organizational issues (Coombs, 1992; Lock et al., 2015). Soebbing and Mason (2009) demonstrated this when they used institutional theory to examine the NBA's attempts to repair its legitimacy after some teams lost games intentionally to improve draft picks. This created legitimacy issues because it threatened two core values associated with sports: competitive balance and league integrity (Lock et al., 2015). This issue may have also affected sponsorships. Galaskiewicz (1985) demonstrated that organizations can become legitimate when connected to the legitimacy of others, but they can also lose legitimacy through associations. In the above example, NBA teams that lost legitimacy would be less attractive to sponsors, who sought to confer the legitimacy of the team onto themselves (O'Reilly & Séguin, 2013; Wilson, Stavros, & Westberg, 2008).

To explain the nature of legitimacy to PR, Boyd (2000) distinguished institutional legitimacy and actional legitimacy. He noted that challenges to institutional legitimacy (i.e., when an organization faces judgments about its continued existence) were rare. Actional legitimacy concerns (i.e. concerns about the legitimacy of specific actions undertaken by an organization) are less catastrophic and more common. They typically arise from ongoing issue management efforts that use PR to gain acceptance of the organization's place in society and to also gain approval from critical publics for specific corporate policies, actions, risky behavior, or controversial decisions (Boyd, 2000).

During times of organizational crisis, when organizational actions are negatively judged by external stakeholders, PR tries to justify or explain what happened. In extreme

cases, this may include challenges to the institutional legitimacy of the organization. In non-crisis situations, PR practitioners attempt to gain legitimacy for actions before or as they happen (Boyd, 2000). Thus, the study of PR activities during actional legitimacy concerns grants insight into more common challenges. For example, in 2015, when the National Hockey League (NHL) announced their seven-year deal with Adidas to design and produce uniforms beginning in 2017, a number of media outlets reported that advertising would also be included (Fox, 2015). This would raise needed revenue for player salaries, but the commercialization of Canada's national sporting identity raised legitimacy concerns. This concern was demonstrated by negative media reports and public opinion (Campingotto, 2015; Jhaveri, 2015). In response, NHL Commissioner Gary Bettman publicly denied any uniform advertising discussions (Fox, 2015). This demonstration of actional legitimacy illustrated that legitimacy questions do not have to affect the existence of the organization (NHL) and that public actions can affect corporate policies and attempts to institutionalize or cognitively legitimize actions.

While sport management researchers have addressed legitimacy from a cognitive or institutional theory perspective (e.g., Naraine & Parent, 2016; Washington & Patterson, 2011), work from a social perspective remains sparse (Lock et al., 2015). Corporations build legitimacy with consistently positive images, making actional legitimacy easier to achieve by influencing their image (Boyd, 2000). Perceptions of organizational image can be used to determine how audiences respond to organizations when questioning their legitimacy (Bhattacharya et al., 1995; Lock et al., 2015). In previous sport research, the image concept was often studied in relation to brand or sponsorship (e.g., Arai, Ko, & Kaplanidou, 2013; Kim & Trail, 2010), with few studies

on organizational IM itself (e.g. Kellison & Mondello, 2012; Parent & Foreman, 2007) and fewer still on organizational IM from a PR perspective.

In management studies, image perceptions have been dissected to comprise social judgments of an organization's legitimacy, correctness, consistency, and trustworthiness (Elsbach, 2003; Grunig, 1993). The need to understand how sport organizations become legitimate and maintain legitimacy (e.g., Macris & Sam, 2014; Strittmatter & Skille, 2017), echoing previous works arguing for sport organizations to spend more time developing an understanding of audience expectations (Lock et al., 2015; Robinson, 2006).

Audience expectations are increasingly expressed and measured through social media (Olkkonen & Luoma-aho, 2014). With a new focus on dialogic communication and its facilitation through social media, it is appropriate to explore publics' use of social media platforms when making legitimacy decisions. Organizations have the opportunity to directly communicate and enter relationships with stakeholders through social media and social networking platforms, including Twitter (Saffer, Sommerfeldt, & Taylor, 2013). These relationships can have a strong influence on organizational legitimacy because, as illustrated above, the modern view of legitimacy building often takes the iterative form of individual opportunistic bricolage, contrasting with the linear view of legitimization that suggests a movement from moral and pragmatic legitimacy-seeking behaviour towards a final stage of cognitive legitimacy (e.g., Greenwood, Suddaby, & Hinings, 2002; Johnson, et al., 2006; Tolbert & Zucker, 1996).

Thus, building individual relationships with stakeholders or stakeholder groups through social media is critical in seeking legitimacy, and it is the role of PR to aid an

organization in this endeavour. The corporate need for public legitimation is obvious in crisis communication; if an organization did not need legitimation from its stakeholders, a crisis communication response would be unnecessary (Bitzer, 1968). In fact, a crisis may be said to arise from a failure to obtain legitimacy from stakeholders.

Most incidents dealing with legitimacy perceptions are action-based. That is, they represent perceptions regarding the legitimacy of a specific action instead of the institutional legitimacy of the organization as a whole. Therefore, while the concept of legitimacy may be monolithic (a macro-level concept), that monolith is comprised of many smaller organizational actions, potentially in both on and off-line interactions. Given the prior discussion of organizational identity and how organizational images are increasingly co-created by internal and external stakeholders, legitimacy and its focus on internal and external stakeholder interactions share a more robust relationship with image than originally suspected. However, the nature of this relationship, where legitimacy directly effects image co-creation, is less clear. Accordingly, this study sought to explore the interrelationships of these constructs in the world of social media sport PR.

Social Media Engagement and Sport

Today's world is dominated by the Internet, which means a variety of things. The Internet has many functions; social media platforms promote a bi-directional flow of information, while web pages remain static and promote a mono-directional flow of information. These parts of the Internet differ in more ways than just their informational flow. They are used differently, and the information they contain is perceived differently as well (Kwak, Kim, & Zimmerman, 2010). Organizational websites are developed, monitored, and promoted as communication tools (Kwak et al., 2010), and Macnamara

(2015) demonstrated their mono-directional communication. This makes websites ideal for posting static information that will not change often and must be projected, such as team rosters for a season, past player statistics, or game schedules. In the past, this one-sided communication through websites was the primary form of digital sport PR.

The advent of social media platforms has upset this dynamic. Mahan (2011) noted that social media platforms allow sport organizations to interact with consumers, athletes, other sport organizations, sponsors, and media. Facebook and Twitter are the most commonly used social media platforms in sport (Abeza & O'Reilly, 2014; Hull, 2014). Facebook acts as a personal webpage where an individual can create a profile and reveal aspects of their identity to others in their social network (Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy, & Silvestre, 2011). Conversely, Twitter, created in 2006, is a microblogging tool that limits messages to 280 characters, allowing users to create and share small amounts of user generated content (Belot, Winand, & Kolyperas, 2016). Twitter frequently incites polarizing discussions between users (Clavio & Kian, 2010).

Social media has dramatically changed the dynamics of sport (Broughton, 2012). Some say the change is due to how sport fans consume technology; thanks to the growing popularity of tablets and other mobile devices, many people like to watch sports and participate in social media at the same time (Vooris & Smith, 2015). This activity is driven by several factors, such as the availability of multiple screens on devices like tablets, the desire to communicate about an ongoing game (especially during commercial breaks), and the need to be “tuned in” to the pulse of other fans around the world (Vooris & Smith, 2015; Witkemper, Lim, & Waldburger, 2012).

In Canada, Facebook was the most popular social media platform in 2017, with a usage rate of 76%. This was followed by LinkedIn (48%), Google+ (42%), Twitter (34%), and Instagram (34% [McKinnon, 2017]). These trends are similar in the United States. In 2016, a Pew research group study showed that Facebook was the most popular form of social media usage (79%), followed by Instagram (32%), Snapchat (27%), LinkedIn (25%), and Twitter (24% [Murnane, 2018]). The top three platforms used to discuss sports were Facebook (75%), YouTube (52%), and Twitter (37% [Karr, 2017]).

In some ways, the ability to instantly communicate with other fans on social media creates an atmosphere similar to that of attending the sport event (Stavros et al., 2014). Messaging through social media may also be a way for fans to connect to players and the team itself by posting messages on official team or player social media accounts (Frederick, Lim, Clavio, & Walsh, 2012).

In their study of how sport fans use social media, Haugh and Watkins (2016) found that Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram, and Twitter were the four most popular platforms used, in that order, while Pinterest and Tumblr were not widely used. The results of this study are a variation of Karr's (2017) findings. Further investigation revealed that Instagram and Snapchat were used for more affective motivations (i.e., entertainment, passtime, escape), while Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram were the most popular platforms, used to satisfy specific needs sought by users. Facebook and Twitter were used for seeking and sharing information more often than other platforms. Twitter was the leading platform for gathering information, seeking entertainment, showing support for a team, expressing opinions, and learning about rules and strategies pertaining to a sport. Witkemper, Lim, & Waldburger (2012) also noted Twitter's second-most use

was for expressing fanship, consistent with the findings of Haugh and Watkins (2016). The paper also noted the importance of interactions, fanship, and relationship building (Holmlund, 1997.)

In a study on how sport fans use social media, Gibbs, O'Reilly, and Brunette (2014) found that 79% of respondents checked Twitter several times per day. Respondents also reported use of additional social-media sites, including Facebook, YouTube, and LinkedIn. Due to differences in social media usage by stakeholders, it has been suggested that sport organizations view social media platforms as pieces of an integrated network (Haugh & Watkins, 2016), with Facebook and Twitter continuing as mainstays of the sport social media landscape (Haugh & Watkins, 2016; Sanderson & Yandle, 2015).

Kwak et al. (2010) determined that message valence, the attractiveness or aversiveness of a message, could be used to measure an individual's attitude towards digital communication, regardless of platform used. They illustrated that mainstream website articles or features were viewed more positively than written articles distributed through social media by users, but this depended on whether users were more or less socially identified with the subject matter (Kwak et al., 2010). In other words, users reacted more closely if they felt that an event was happening to them (Wakefield & Hancock, 2016). Fans who more strongly identified with a certain team preferred content from websites or other types of mono-directional information feeds more so than causal fans or observers, who preferred user-generated content from their peers. Further, those individuals who identified strongly with the team demonstrated increased levels of

resistance when the message was counter-attitudinal, compared to their peers who identified less strongly with the team (Kwak et al., 2010).

This relationship between team identification and content preference has significant implications for message credibility; when counter-attitudinal messages were presented, individuals were more likely to challenge or otherwise disparage the message creator (Kwak et al., 2010). It also explained their preference for mono-directional message content from the sport organization, which would generally not challenge their existing perceptions. Similar types of fan behaviour in a non-social media context have been observed in the form of BIRGing or CORFing.

Hogan (2010) theorized that all social media platforms could be considered virtual “exhibition spaces” (p. 20), where individuals submit artifacts (i.e., their messages) to show and distribute to others. Fans can use social media to show and distribute their own expressions (Stavros et al., 2014), emphasizing how important a team, athlete, or sport organization is to their life. Stavros et al. (2014), when trying to understand why fans use Facebook to engage in a relational experience with sport figures and other associations in the NBA, found that highly identified fans were motivated by esteem, their passion for the sport and team, and a sense of camaraderie through participation in social media.

Message valence and fan identity can have repercussions when a sport organization’s legitimacy is questioned. Sanderson (2013) demonstrated that sport figures use social media to confront offending journalists and gain support by engaging directly with fans. He analyzed 717 Facebook interactions regarding Brian Kelly — the University of Cincinnati football coach who left Cincinnati to coach at Notre Dame —

revealing support for the coach despite negative media attention. This shows that fans collectively use social media to moderate perceived threats to their social identity (Sanderson, 2013).

In a similar vein, Brown and Billings (2013) explored Twitter messages regarding the NCAA rule violation accusations against the University of Miami. They determined that fans and followers were more likely to attack the individual making the accusations than they were to join in the perceived lessening of their team or athlete. Further, fans were more likely to use diversion or redirection as a coping mechanism rather than disparage their team (Brown & Billings, 2013). Such actions illustrate that social judgment-inhibiting factors are evidenced in an online sport setting.

Social media also allows organizations to project images to a greater number of audiences, as can external parties and arbitrators (e.g., traditional and new media outlets) and direct stakeholder-to-stakeholder interactions (Gioia et al., 2014). As noted earlier, Rindova (1999) referred to these as refracted images: altered interpretations of the initial images projected by the organization.

Filo, Lock, and Karg (2015) argued that “social media present a cost-effective medium that: embraces interactivity, collaboration and co-creation above one-to-many communication; it integrates communication and distribution channels; provides opportunities for customization; and delivers superior speed to the delivery of information communication and feedback” (Filo et al., 2015, p.167). However, while social media allows content sharing between users, it does not always foster the dialogic potential inherent in its design. Luchman, Bergstrom, and Krulikowski (2014) found that while social media is primarily used for socialization, this mainly took the form one-way

communication activities, such as providing updates, leaning about others, and information-seeking, as opposed to looking for direct dialogue.

Linville, McGee, and Hicks (2012) corroborated this reticence to use social media platforms for dialogue. In their analysis of Twitter use by students and faculty from 133 colleges and universities, they concluded that the majority ($N = 944$; 83.5%) provided information rather than invited dialogue. Only a smaller number of tweets (29.6%; $N = 334$) evidenced dialogic engagement, with a subset of 269 tweets (80.5% of 334) retweeted. Belot, Winand, & Kolyperas (2016) also concluded that FIFA does not use Twitter to its full potential. FIFA mainly shares one-way information instead of engaging its followers.

This lack of dialogue can also be seen between an organization and its social media followers. Lovejoy, Waters, and Saxton (2012) conducted research on non-profit organizations to identify how Twitter was used for communication. In their analysis of 2,655 tweets across 73 not-for-profit organizations, they found that the social media platform was primarily used to aid the mono-directional dissemination of information, with the organizations entering into dialogue with fewer than 20% of followers.

Rather than exploit the potential of social media use, the majority of non-profits did not use Twitter as a platform to engage stakeholders. According to Lovejoy et al. (2012), this is a counter-intuitive use of the communication tool, as social media provides an opportunity for organizations to demonstrate responsiveness to situations and encourage others to engage in interactive communication themselves. They stated the underutilization of public engagement and relationship building through Twitter was analogous to receiving an email and failing to respond.

Two other studies found that organizations outside the non-profit sector held similar expectations of dialogic responsiveness. Lee and Park (2013) concluded that stakeholders viewed organizations who responded to dialogic engagement as more trustworthy, stronger at relationship-building, and better at maintaining a relationship-based corporate image and identity focused on social responsibility. Organizations were also viewed more positively than those who did not respond when posting on the same platform. In a sport setting, Pronschinske et al. (2012) noted that sport fans dissociated themselves from teams, sport organizations, or athletes who failed to respond to users seeking dialogic communication.

These studies suggest that while individuals operating in an organization's social media platform generally did not expect dialogic engagement, they did expect dialogic responsiveness when seeking to engage organizations. Macnamara (2015) found that listening was a key feature in the dialogic flow of communication, noting that this could be demonstrated through an active engagement process on social media. Macnamara highlighted that engagement in social media and bidirectional communication was not the end result of the listening process, as listening required closure. In turn, active listening (i.e., seeking out feedback and being responsive to it) fostered a stronger stakeholder sense of organizational identity due to the enhanced relationship built based on both dialog and action to resolution (Macnamara, 2015; Scott & Lane, 2000). Responsiveness fosters trust, relational closeness, and positive feelings towards an organization (Lee & Park, 2013; Pronschinske et al. 2012). In organizational image and identity terms, this is linked to the process of image co-creation.

Overall, social media has come to represent an essential component of the relationship between sport organizations and their fans. Social media primarily allows teams to present mono-directional information to fans who strongly identify with them. In return, social media platform allows fans to demonstrate their affiliation to a team. This is an acceptable and even desired way to communicate with those who strongly identify with the team or organization, but social media also allows organizations to engage in discursive, bidirectional communication with fans who identify with them less strongly (i.e., casual fans). Although the capacity for dialogue exists, there is little expectation of dialogue among social media users. However, they do expect dialogue with the organization if the user seeks to engage the organization directly. If social media is a tool used by organizations to seek legitimacy per a social theory PR perspective, organizations must seek legitimacy acceptance not just from committed fans but from those who are less identified (or do not identify at all) with them. In the latter case, literature suggests a dialogic social media approach would be more effective.

The dialogic potential of social media remains underutilized. Organizations must deal with this issue going forward if they are to use social media to their advantage in the legitimacy-seeking process of building co-created images. With PR's focus on dialogue and relationship building, it can provide additional insights to assist in unlocking the dialogic potential of social media.

Social Media and PR

It is hard to overstate the importance of social media to PR as a whole, let alone sport PR. Avidar (2013) proposed a model related to communication and relationship building, effectively focusing on the dialogic nature of social media and its use within PR

(a co-creational perspective). Her model, provided in Appendix G, was developed from a study that sought to assess the concepts of communication and relationship-building by exploring 799 associations and businesses representing the for-profit ($N = 373$) and non-profit sectors ($N = 426$). She believed responsiveness and the encouragement of user engagement on social media were pivotal to building relationships between the organization and its social media communities. According to Avidar, to achieve engagement and interactivity from a bi-directional communicative perspective, social media responsiveness must be immediate. Therefore, findings of none, moderate, and highly interactive response levels, as correlated to increased levels of organizational PR effectiveness, were unsurprising (Avidar, 2013).

Engagement through social media varies culturally, as does its use for organizational communications (Men & Tsai, 2012). Brennan and Croft (2012) conducted a multinational study that included the United States, Switzerland, Korea, Germany, and Japan. They determined that organizations in the United States made the most frequent use of social media for PR. According to Brennan and Croft, the prolific use of a virtual interactive social media environment gives instant access to word-of-mouth endorsements within the virtual community.

In an international study of 2,710 PR professionals representing 43 countries in Europe, Moreno et al. (2015) sought to explore how social media is used relative to PR professionals' perception of this genre of communication media. Results showed that PR professionals who participated highly in social media engagement believed that the platforms were more important and likely to exert a stronger influence on stakeholders, both external and internal (Moreno et al., 2015). They also determined that social media

PR practitioners frequently lacked the professional level of competency required to achieve the desired results of relationship-building and informational gatekeeping, the monitoring of social media messages and users.

Practitioners also seek to avoid the ambiguity and risk of dialogic communication in a media environment where a poorly worded Facebook post or misunderstood tweet can generate a wave of negative publicity (Anderson, Swenson, & Gilkerson, 2016; Cardwell, Williams, & Pyle, 2017). However, even when fully engaged in the dialogic aspects of social media, PR practitioners may be constrained by what their organizations expect from their PR departments. For instance, Lane and Bartlett (2016) reported that using dialogic principles to engage stakeholders was viewed positively until practitioners perceived that using them may hinder the achievement of organizational objectives.

Gibbs and Haynes (2013) interviewed sport PR professionals from the United States and Canada. They concluded that Twitter has dramatically changed the way sport PR is conducted, suggesting that Twitter has surpassed traditional journalism in the dissemination and communication of sport content, making it the most influential social media platform in modern sport (Gibbs & Haynes, 2013). They noted that the landscape of social media, coupled with the specific PR job functions associated with social media requirements, have changed sport media relations. One of the most important new aspects of sport social media relations is the need to constantly monitor each platform, especially for tweets or other digital content from their own athletes (Gibbs & Haynes, 2013). Whether social media, Twitter in particular, have displaced traditional media or not, the importance of social media to PR is clear.

Research Gap

In a social media world, where PR's role and ability to dialogically engage stakeholders online is unclear from both an organizational and stakeholder perspective, it is important for practitioners to understand the dialogic expectations of both. This communication can be said to take the form of IM, and it is becoming more important in a social media world, where perceptions formed on social media are immediate and durable. IM in a social media world is becoming more difficult due the speed of communication, which has become greater than ever before due the growing availability of information online and social media's ability to facilitate stakeholder interactions between each other and with organizations themselves. This literature review has demonstrated a need to study the complex interrelationship between identity, image, and legitimacy as aspects of an organization's PR image-building activities. This is especially true in an online environment, where stakeholders are bombarded with large amounts of information and rely on legitimacy-based heuristic scrutinizations regarding an organization's actions. These relationships are broadly outlined in Figure 2.2.

By using a social theory PR lens, organizational identity and legitimacy-seeking activities provide the foundation of an organization's attempts to co-create image. This is done through authentic images of the organization being received by external stakeholders, who make legitimacy judgments based on those images. These images are evaluated along moral, pragmatic, or cognitive dimensions to determine if that organization meets the stakeholder's idea of how the organization should function in society.

This evaluation establishes how stakeholders will act towards the organization, and the organization will perceive stakeholders' actions through its construed image. If external stakeholders take actions that express a negative view of the organization, this may indicate a disconnect between the organization's and stakeholders' understanding of legitimacy. This disconnect may require an organization to rethink its identity construct or how its image is perceived. If no gap exists, then internal and external stakeholders have the same understanding of organizational legitimacy. Organizational image has been successfully co-created, and no change to identity or image is required.

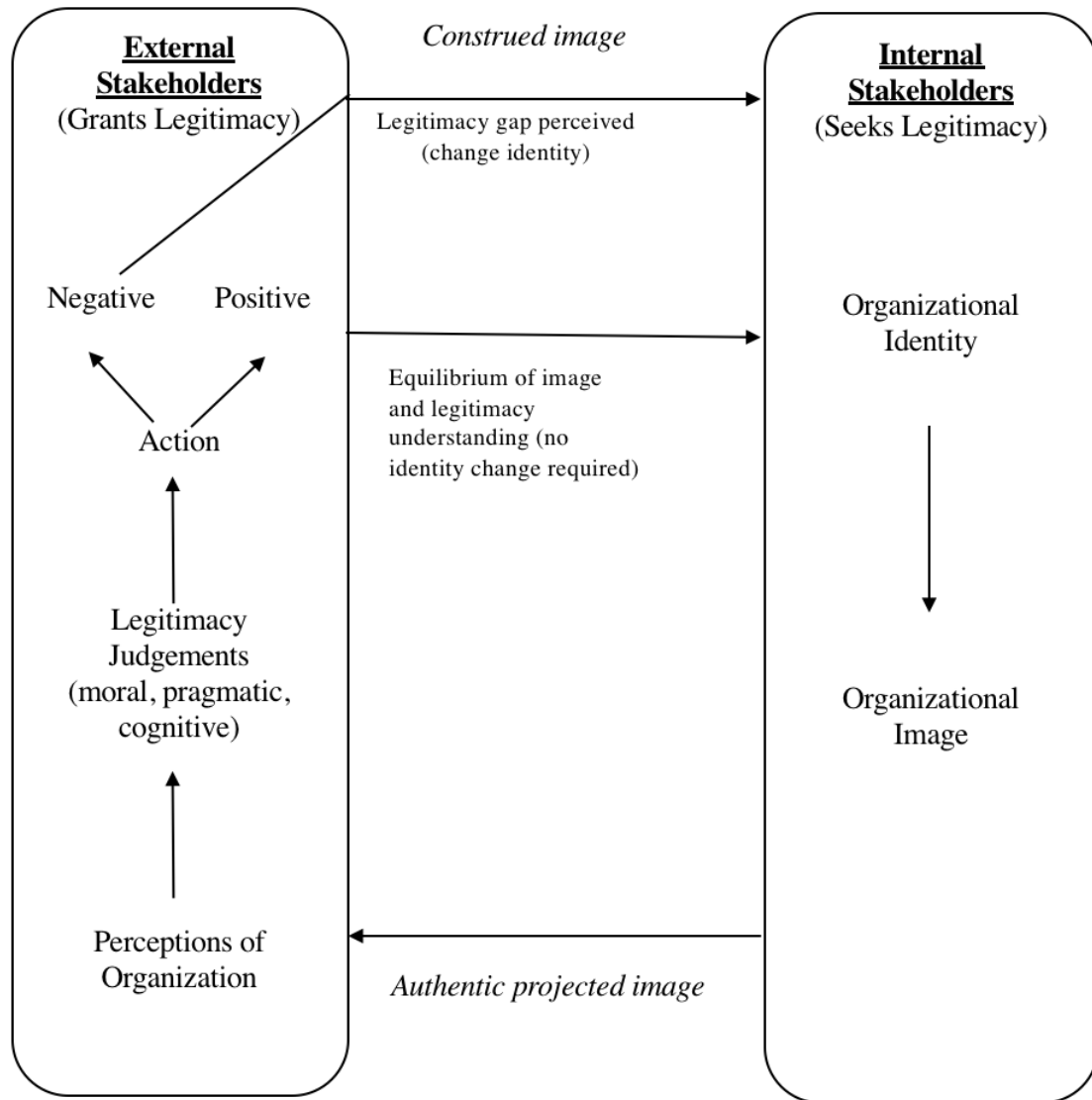


Figure 2.2. Conceptual understanding of image, identity, and legitimacy relationships in IM.

Nekmat et al. (2014) argued that future considerations in PR IM should seek to fill the scholarly gap formed by the lack of empirical approaches, as “a discriminately large proportion of IM research in PR is focused on examining image as a process of human and mediated communication” (p. 286). They suggested conceptualizing image as

a perceptual attribute derived from individuals' cognitive-attitudinal dispositions toward an organization.

Using the proposition suggested above and outlined in Figure 2.2, legitimacy dimensions could serve as an empirical tool to capture cognitive-attitudinal dispositions, allowing future studies to address image research as both a process and an outcome to be measured (Lock et al., 2015). This study sought to fill that gap by attempting to better understand the relationships and interactions between identity, image, and legitimacy as an organization seeks to manage its image in a social media world. The second phase of the study sought to understand how these three concepts manifest through IM on social media, as well as how these concepts can be evaluated based on the actions and reactions of online communication through Twitter.

While the motivation of fans', athletes', and organizations' use of Twitter has been explored relative to engagement and identification (e.g., Abeza & O'Reilly 2014; Avidar, 2013; Gioia et al., 2014; Kwak et al., 2010; Lee & Park, 2013; Stavros et al., 2014; Wakefield & Hancock, 2016; Waters et al., 2011), these issues were not viewed from the co-creational image perspective required of a social theory approach to PR. Further, these articles focused on how individuals or entities used social media; they did not focus on the role of sport PR in IM from the perspective of both the organization and its audiences, a necessary perspective in organizational legitimacy-seeking actions. While some, such as Abeza et al. (2014), used a relationship-marketing approach to study Twitter, Yang and Taylor (2015) stressed that PR organizational relationships were broader than those of marketing. To address this gap in the literature, this study went beyond PR's media relations function in sport — beyond the product-oriented function of

marketing studies — and explored how sport PR communicates image and legitimacy to society at large.

CHAPTER 3: METHOD

In light of the problem identified above, the purpose of this qualitative embedded exploratory case study was to explore how the emergence of social media technology and its use has contributed to the development of organizational identity, organizational image, and organizational legitimacy in the specific context of sports in a social media world. The following section outlines the research position, design, rationale, context, data collection, and analysis techniques required to the answer the research questions. Steps taken to ensure research quality are also included.

Positioning the Research

The choice of research design is systematically related to the issues of ontological and epistemological positions (Bryman, 1984, Guba & Lincoln, 2005; McNamee, 2005). Ontology is about one's constitutional view of social reality, while epistemology concerns the knowledge-production process, asking what can be known about the world and how we may come to know it (Guba & Lincoln, 2005; McNamee, 2005).

Organizational concepts such as image, legitimacy, and identity are process-oriented social constructions in this study. These concepts are subjective and difficult to quantify, so an interpretative qualitative method is best for learning how stakeholders communicate them. Interpretive inquiry is devoted to the epistemological philosophy of the social construction of reality (Berger & Luckmann, 1967). Social constructionism views truth as constructed through engagement and experiences with realities (Crotty, 1998). Social constructionism is of particular significance when applying a social approach to the study of PR because of its emphasis on the centrality of language, symbolism, and the significance of social interaction processes (Allen, 2007).

Furthermore, discursive actions between an organization and its audiences are intertwined with broader cultural discourses. This affects external stakeholders' perceptions of image, identity, and legitimacy through social interactions with the organization (Allen, 2007; Bitektine, 2011; Gioia et al., 2014). Frandsen and Johansen (2011) underscored the social constructionist viewpoint from a PR perspective thusly:

Organizations are porous or permeable constructions, letting formal and informal messages go in and out. Citizens show interest and intervene in the internal affairs of companies from which they buy their products and services. Politicians use an organizational crisis for the opportunity to promote their own political agendas. Employees follow closely how journalists and social network users react to the external crisis communication of their own organization. All these stakeholders contribute to the rhetorical arena that opens up in most crisis situations, and in which many corporate and non-corporate voices meet, compete, collaborate or negotiate. (p. 358)

A social constructionist worldview aligns with a social approach to PR and can help explain the relationship between an organization's identity, image, and legitimacy, required for the research questions. In a social view of PR, social reality remains a dynamic (Bentele, 1997) and shared process (Bentele & Ruhl, 1993). Thus, created images are shared perceptions held by stakeholders and the organization (Hatch & Schultz, 1997; Ihlen & van Ruler, 2009). This suggests a dynamic process of co-creating image meaning (Gioia et al., 2014; Johansson, 2009). Although image construction

originates from an organization and its identity constructs (Gioia et al., 2013; Scott & Lane, 2000), in a co-creational approach, it remains an inherently social process, as the organization often adapts and responds to feedback or changes in the stakeholder environment (Gilpin, 2010; Gioia et al., 2013).

Falkheimer and Heide (2006) determined that the social constructionist approach to communication required the researcher to maintain an audience-based perspective on communication, with communication being both proactive and interactive, emphasizing dialogue and focusing on pre-crisis PR. Thus, pairing dialogical theory with social constructionism was consistent when viewing PR through a social theory lens and allowed insights gleaned from micro-level specific organizational-public interactions on social media platforms such as Twitter to be linked with macro social theory-based concepts, such as legitimacy. Such an approach required interpretivism, which lends human interest to the research. According to Myers (2008), “Interpretive researchers assume that access to reality (given or socially constructed) is only through social constructions such as language, consciousness, shared meanings, and instruments” (p.38)

The results of adopting a constructionist view for this study were manifest in the research design and implementation (Figure 3.1). Because constructionism suggests a socially constructed nature of reality and the intrinsic variability of the human experience, the study adopted a qualitative method to explore the differing constructions of and perspectives on legitimacy, image, and identity. Another result of this choice was that, although the study adopted specific definitions of these key terms, the study participants’ own perceptions of these terms would not necessarily align with the chosen definitions. However, the use of a qualitative methodology ensured that the study could

still capture valuable data about these perceptions by approaching the issue more descriptively.

Moreover, the study sought to explore how these notions have shifted in a social media world and to what extent they are now co-created rather than dictated by an organization's PR staff. This necessitated an investigation of an exploratory nature, because the combination of social media, image, identity, and legitimacy in a sport setting has not yet been the subject of comprehensive research. That is to say, the phenomenon under study in this research (i.e., the effect of social media on image, identity, and legitimacy from a PR perspective [Bhattacharjee, 2012]) is a relatively untapped line of inquiry. A qualitative approach is appropriate in such exploratory research because qualitative research asks broad, open-ended questions that allow it to explore new phenomena without being limited to the range of answers present on a pre-made research instrument (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

Overall, qualitative inquiry is richly descriptive and exploratory in nature, asking questions of "why" or "how," and it seeks answers to these questions both in broad terms and through the self-described subjective perceptions of research participants (Yin, 2014). Therefore, qualitative research was an appropriate method in exploring and interpreting these complex phenomena because of the availability of tools that produce in-depth, rich, and descriptive data (Silverman, 2013), which aligned with the research questions. The use of the social construction perspective and its corresponding interpretivism guided the research design and the selection of the types of data collection and analysis used (Figure 3.1). Interpretivism involves the researcher interpreting elements of the study. According to Myers (2008), "researchers assume that access to

reality (given or socially constructed) is only through social constructions such as language, consciousness, shared meanings, and instruments” (p.32).

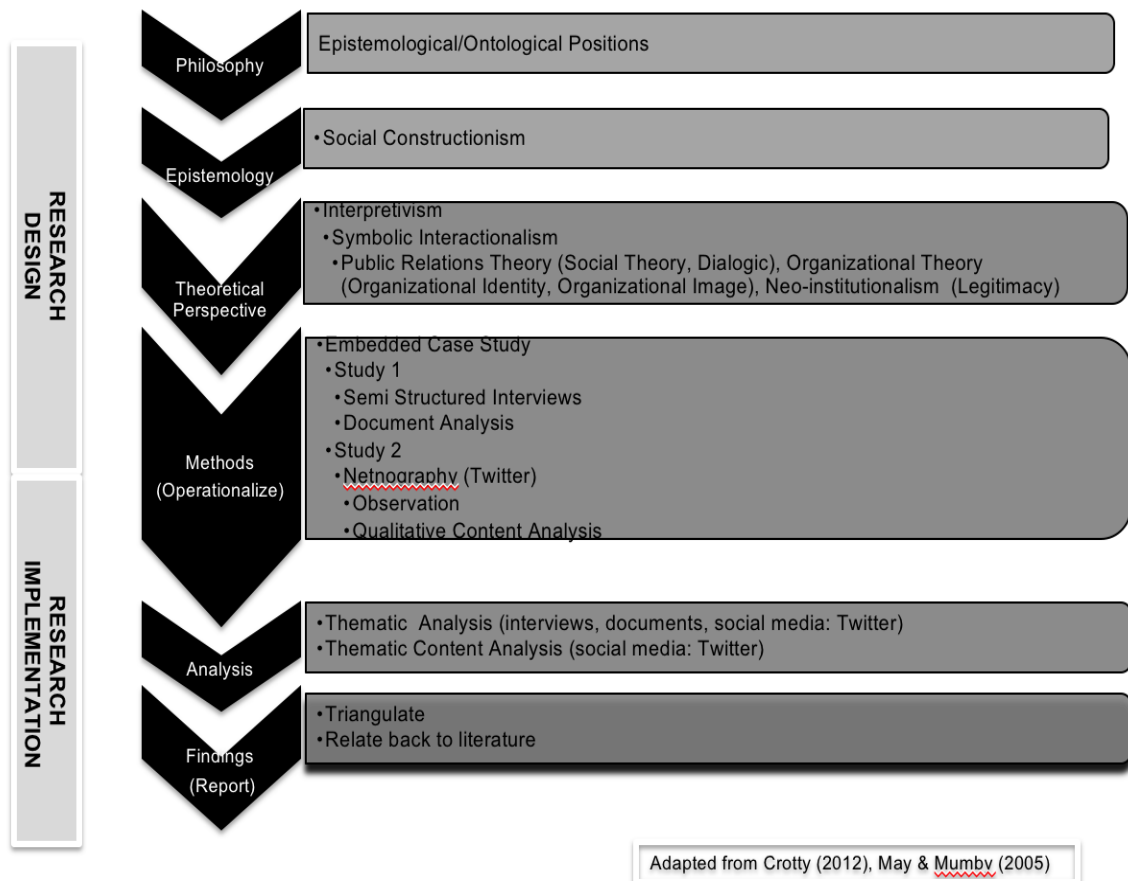


Figure 3.1. Research design and implementation.

The use of the social construction perspective and interpretative method has further implications for the operationalization of the research. Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Maykut and Morehouse (2002) suggested that the axioms or assumptions about the social world underpinning the positivist paradigm differ greatly from the assumptions

about social reality underpinning the phenomenological paradigm, which includes social constructionism. It is these differing sets of assumptions that shape the way researchers approach social inquiry. Those adopting a positivist position tend towards quantitative methodology, and those adopting a phenomenological position tend towards qualitative methodology. These differing sets of assumptions encompass five key axiomatic stances concerning the nature of reality (ontology), the relationship of knower to known (epistemology), the possibility of generalization, the possibility of causal linkages, and the role of values in inquiry (axiology). These five key points of difference between the positivist and phenomenological paradigms concerning these axiomatic stances may be outlined as follows:

Table 3.1

Axioms of Positivist and Phenomenological Paradigms. Adapted from Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Morehouse and Maykut (2002).

Axioms About	Positivist Paradigm	Phenomenological Paradigm
1. The nature of reality	Reality is single, tangible, and fragmentable into independent variables and processes, any of which can be studied independently of the others; inquiry can converge onto that reality until, finally, it can be predicted and controlled.	There are multiple realities. These realities are socio-psychological constructions forming an inter-connected whole. These realities can only be studied holistically. Given the multi-dimensionality of these realities, prediction and control are unlikely outcomes of inquiry, although some level of understanding (verstehen) can be achieved.
2. The relationship of knower to known	The knower can stand outside what is to be known. True objectivity is possible.	The inquirer and the 'object' of inquiry interact to influence one another; knower and known are inseparable.
3. The possibility of generalization	Time- and context-free generalizations are possible (nomothetic statements).	Only time- and context-bound working hypotheses are possible (ideographic statements).
4. The possibility of causal linkages	One event comes before another event and can be said to cause that event.	Events shape each other. Multi-directional relationships can be discovered.
5. The role of values	Inquiry is value-free.	Inquiry is value-bound; values mediate and shape approaches to and engagement in the research process.

A phenomenological approach was adopted over a positivist position due to the congruence between phenomenology and social constructionism. Social construction theory was created by Alfred Schütz, who is also credited with the introduction of phenomenology (Schültz, 1967). The term "social construction theory" was invented by a student of Schütz, Peter Berger (Berger & Luckman, 1967).

Arguably, the differing axioms or postulates underpinning these paradigms have implications for individual researchers in designing a methodological model (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). They also have implications for the research community in identifying the criteria upon which the worthiness and plausibility of research projects are to be judged (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Therefore, in keeping with the philosophical underpinnings supporting qualitative methodologies — that the researchers examined the lived experiences, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours that shape inner meaning and perceptions of study participants — and that this phenomenological stance is consistent with social constructivism — that knowledge is constructed through interaction with others (McKinley, 2015) — objectivity was maintained only as far as is possible within a social constructivist paradigm. Therefore, as with all qualitative studies, findings are time and context bound, as qualitative researchers discuss transferability (context to context) rather than generalizability.

Research Design and Rationale

The specific research design for the study was that of a qualitative embedded exploratory case study. The implications of this approach are discussed in detail on pages 92-94. In a broad sense, case study research is most apt for studying issues that are intrinsically contextual (Yin, 2014). A case study brings together data from multiple

sources, allowing the researcher to analyze the ways in which context comes into play by triangulating the various sources of data (Yin, 2014). Issues of identity, image, and legitimacy are innately contextual, as noted during the literature review, due to the interactions between the organization and its stakeholders. For example, as organizational identity is the cognitive organizational character or self-image held by internal stakeholders (Gioia et al., 2013), it will develop differently from organization to organization, as will the context of the sociopolitical judgments upon which an organization will be examined by external stakeholders (Bitektine, 2011; Lock et al., 2015).

Thus, a case study approach was identified as a good fit for the overall problem under study. It allowed the consideration of complex causal relations and interactions to be identified and interpreted (George & Bennet, 2005), a feature especially appropriate when studying process-oriented theories (Yin, 2014), such as image and legitimacy (Yin, 2014). Consistent with a social constructionist approach, case studies obtain “whether” and “how” elements of interactions, including those among various stakeholder types, such as employees, fans, and sponsors (George & Bennet, 2005). However, before the researcher can understand the “why” through analytical coding of the data, the “whether” and “how” in the data must be identified through data collection (Gubrium & Holstein, 1997).

Case studies can be single or multiple in their nature. Therefore, what sets single and multiple case studies apart is that a multiple case study looks at two or more cases in different contexts (e.g., comparing a sports team in New York to one in Toronto), whereas a single case study focuses on a single context. Yin (2014) suggested a single

case design was appropriate under several circumstances, such as if the case was critical, unusual, common, revelatory, or longitudinal. For this dissertation, a single case study was appropriate because the case under study was revelatory (multi-team conglomerate) in nature.

It should be noted, however, that an overall single case study may not be comprised exclusively of a single unit of analysis. A single case study can also contain embedded units of analysis (Appendix H). In this study, there were three strata of embedded units of analysis: the organization (macro), the team (mezzo), and the tweet (micro), all operating in a single case study. As described by Yin (2014), the sub-units of analysis within an embedded case study can often add significant opportunities for extensive analysis, enhancing insights into the case.

An embedded case design allowed the study of a conglomerate organization, which permitted greater data comparison among organizational entities (teams). Since multi-team ownership is not the norm in professional sports, it lends itself to single case study research due to its unusual and revelatory nature (Yin, 2014) and because of the relational interaction of image creation and interpretation among its teams.

This interaction granted insights that might not have been revealed in a more normalized (Flyvbjerg, 2006) single ownership structure. Using a multi-team conglomerate is more likely to disentangle an organization's macro-level identity, image, and legitimacy characteristics from team brand associations (Kunkel, Doyle, & Funk, 2016; Lock et al., 2015). Furthermore, understanding the case of multi-team ownership may be important going forward. While this type of ownership remains uncommon, it is a

growing trend for teams in the same city to be owned by the same entity, thereby achieving business synergies and reducing costs (Whittall, 2014).

As noted on page 17, obtaining access to even a single case proved difficult. Thus, while a multiple case study may have provided additional cross-contextual data, it would have been difficult to find multiple comparable conglomerate sport organizations willing to participate. A single sport organization with multiple teams provides a good opportunity for a single case study, but such a case study also requires an embedded design due to its conglomerate nature. As noted earlier, an embedded case study design is based on multiple units of analysis (Yin, 2014). The identification of sub-units allowed for a more detailed level of inquiry, as it offered insights into the interactions among individual (micro), team (mezzo), and overall organizational (macro) aspects of identity, image, and legitimacy.

Moreover, this research design is well-matched when studying complex organizational concepts that involve multiple participants and interacting sequences of events (Bhattacharjee, 2012). Case study is an ideal methodology when a holistic, in-depth investigation is needed (Feagin, Orum, & Sjoberg, 1991). Single cases allow researchers to investigate phenomena in depth, providing a rich description and connecting specific understandings (Walsham, 1995).

One common criticism of single case studies is the lack of generalizability. Yin (2014) responded that single case studies were generalizable to theoretical propositions and not to populations or universes. Thus, the case study did not aim to represent a sample, and the goal of the research was to provide findings based on analysis instead of relying upon statistical input from which to generalize findings. As noted by Walsham

(1995), the purpose of generalization from a case study is to extend and generate concepts. This is similar to qualitative research as a whole, which seeks to explore the theoretical landscape rather than creating generalizable empirical results (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Therefore, findings and conclusions drawn from data analysis in this study may be transferable between contexts, but they are not generalizable or replicable. As Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue, "it is virtually impossible to imagine any human behavior that is not heavily mediated by the context in which it occurs. One can easily conclude that generalisations that are intended to be context free will have little that is useful to say about human behavior" (p. 62).

Data Sources

Following the social constructivist approach, the research relied on qualitative data. Since qualitative case studies shed light on the "why" and "how," the generation of data through semi-structured interviews, documentation, and a netnography helped create knowledge. The use of multiple data methods within the case study allowed for triangulation, where varied data sources are combined to help confirm and justify the researcher's interpretation of the data (Creswell, 2014; Miles & Huberman, 1994). The semi-structured interviews contained questions about past, current, and future desired images to help provide context and greater understandings for the data collected. They also explored the concept of legitimacy. Documents were collected from OSEG to provide an understanding of how the organization perceived and expressed identity and image, while netnography conducted on Twitter sought to learn how these concepts were manifested.

Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were deemed appropriate for the study, as they are the preferred tool for exploring what a person thinks of a topic when a researcher only has one chance to interview them (Galletta, 2013; Irvine, Drew, & Sainsbury, 2013). Semi-structured interviews provide data focused on the topic area (Daymon & Holloway, 2011). Semi-structured interviews also allowed the researcher to approach each interview with a general focus and set of set questions, ensuring that important topics were covered while allowing for flexibility within the interview process. Notwithstanding adherence to the interview topic schedule, the nature of the interview process also allowed participants to express their world view in a free and spontaneous manner (Creswell, 2014). The structured element of the interview process meant there was consistency of topics across multiple interviews, facilitating comparisons across and between participants' contributions during the encoding process following data collection (Dayman & Holloway, 2011).

The interviews followed the format set forth in the interview guide (Appendix G), which was tested for robustness in a pilot effort prior to use. Three pilot interviews were transcribed and coded to ensure the interview guide was sufficiently aligned with the research questions and could assist the researcher in testing and improving his interviewing skills and techniques before commencing the main study interviews.

Due to the semi-structured interview format, the researcher occasionally deviated from the guide depending on the responses of the participants. Interviews ranged from 25 to 45 minutes, balancing interviewee time constraints with the need for understanding (Daymon & Holloway, 2011). Interviews were conducted at the interviewee's

convenience. Interviews were primarily administered over the phone, but some were also conducted face-to-face. Interviews with fans of each of OSEG's teams were conducted prior to a regular season game and at halftime (or between periods in the case of the 67's) during the fall of 2016. As described in the following sections, interview data were analyzed using qualitative thematic analysis, then triangulated document sources.

Documentation

According to Yin (2014), documentation includes such records as administrative documents, evaluations, and reports. The researcher must ensure awareness of the context in which data were created; specifically, the audience and purpose of the material must be considered (Yin, 2014). For this study, the types of document materials used were pertinent to the first two research questions, as they sought to help the researcher understand the ways identity and image were understood and expressed by OSEG, as well as how they might influence organizational legitimacy-seeking actions.

Twitter

Computer-mediated discourse (CMD) is the communication produced when humans interact with one another by transmitting messages via networked or mobile computers or devices, and it displays both textual and oral discourse characteristics (Herring & Androutsopoulos, 2015). Advantages of using online data sources include the relative ease of data attainability, often spanning years; the fact that the data are always there, allowing the researcher to revisit the data as new categories of analysis emerge; that the data are not subject to traditional response bias; and that the discourse among participants can be observed directly in their natural setting of interaction (Levina & Vaast, 2015).

However, the big data-capturing software commonly used in published research of Twitter and other CMD platforms does not allow the mining/retrieval of replies nor the sentiment of those replies (Driscoll & Walker, 2014). The data, captured through such big data software programs, also do not allow researchers to come into direct contact with the dataset in its original (cultural/natural) setting (Driscoll & Walker, 2014). Using big data techniques in social media has also proved particularly difficult due to the language and lexicon of messages, leading to mistakes in message-interpretation (Ghiassi, Skinner, & Zimbra, 2013).

Thus, to avoid such snares, capture the dialogic nature of Twitter, and fully understand the context of the data when coding, the researcher combined big data capture with netnography. An ethnographically grounded approach to PR research, such as netnography, has been suggested as PR work continually crosses cultures within and between organizations and communities (L'Etang, 2012). Therefore, to answer the third and fourth research questions about how the constructs of identity, image, and legitimacy manifest through social media, a netnographic method was employed.

Ethnography is the qualitative strategy a researcher uses to study an intact cultural group in a natural setting over a period of time (Creswell, 2014). Netnography is an ethnographic approach applied to the study of social interaction in online environments (Kozinets, 1998/2006/2012). It emerged as an adaptation of the premises of the ethnographic method that was originally designed to investigate offline culture (Braga, 2009), and it has been deemed appropriate to study co-creation within an online communities and social media spaces (Costello, McDermott, & Wallace, 2017). As Costello, Witney, Green, and Bradshaw (2012) stated, "netnography recognizes that the

cultures of online communities are constructed by the members who are invested in their development; hence their description and any construction of theory should be derived from the community members in question” (p. 2).

Kozinets (2006) identified three types of netnography: observational, participant-observational, and autonetnography, which range along a continuum from observational “lurking” (no researcher participation and unobtrusive) to active participation, and in online conversations and activities, as in the case of autonetnography. Thus, capturing social media content may be participatory or non-participatory depending on the research design. Costello et al. (2017) argued that “the once accepted need for human presence in netnographic studies is giving way to nonparticipatory (passive) approaches, which claim to be naturalistic and bias-free. While this may be tenable in some environments, it also removes the opportunity for co-creation in online communities and social media spaces.” (p.1). The requirement for the second two research questions was to observe engagement between relevant actors, and it did not require input from the researcher to preserve the naturalistic enquiry elements. It also removed potential for researcher bias through such engagement. Co-creation with the researcher was therefore not required, as has occurred in other observational netnographic studies (e.g. Abeza et al., 2017; Stavros et al., 2013).

To ensure the data were observed in their original (cultural/natural) setting, including the observation of pictures, hashtags, links, and the context of the tweet itself, the researcher returned to the social media platform during the analysis stage of the research, explained in later in the chapter. Thus, the study design, as it relates to social media, was based on the philosophical underpinnings of netnography (Kozinets, 2017) as an online research method applied to understand contemporary digital communications

and its yet-evolving principles of application, as opposed to the researcher performing a traditional content analysis, which may fail to properly interpret discourse outside of its natural digital setting.

The study followed Kozinets's (2016) methodological procedures for conducting netnography: making *entrée* (formulation of research questions and identification of appropriate online source for the study) and data collection (obtaining data from the computer-mediated communications and observations of the communication), followed by data analysis and interpretation (classification, coding analysis, and contextualization of communicative acts), as well as ensuring ethical standards.

In making *entrée*, the study investigated ways social media was used in IM. This required the selection of a social media platform to serve as a source of evidence. Twitter was chosen as the source of the social media data for the study because Twitter is ideally suited to organizational performances of self-branding and the demonstration of professional self-identity (Page, 2012). Distinct from other contemporary social network sites, such as LinkedIn or Facebook, the default relationship among Twitter members is non-reciprocal; if member A chooses to follow member B, this does not entail that member B will automatically gain access to member A's profile information.

The asymmetric flow influences the processes of self-branding and identity, whereby one-to-many updates can be broadcast to an audience of potentially millions without necessarily requiring that the updater receive updates from the audience in return (O'Reilly, 2009). This makes Twitter one of the most open forms of social media communication. Its one-to-many communication structure makes it the nearest social media equivalent to the agora or public square (Burnap et al., 2015).

Open platforms that do not require reciprocal binary relationships, such as Twitter, are shifting the power dynamics and increasing the complexity of online debates between organizations and society (Castello et al., 2016). Open platforms provide access to multiple stakeholders and increase speed in communications, and their apparent lack of gate-keeping mechanisms facilitates two-way communication between participants (Kent & Taylor, 2016) without formal hierarchies (Beckert, 2009). Open platforms are therefore unique spaces to study organizations and society as they seek and grant legitimacy (Castello et al., 2016).

Other social media platforms, such as Facebook and LinkedIn, have reciprocal binary relationships where the other user needs to accept your follow request, suggesting the acceptance of a two-way bond and an increased potential for dialogue (Naraine, 2017). However, such online followers or friends may not signify a user's close relations; instead, they signify a user's choice of content (Hogan, 2010). For example, Facebook users add many friends to their online profile to more fully participate in the social platform and are not an indication of relational closeness. In short, friends are a form of access online, while followers are a form of information-management; the terms friend and follower do not match their original meanings (Hogan, 2010).

Thus, while reciprocal social media sites such as Facebook share the same attributes as non-reciprocal sites such as Twitter, they have fewer friends and followers, potentially limiting the number of users who may be exposed to an organization's communication and thus the ability to engage in dialogue with the organizations or other Twitter users. For example, as noted on page 20, the Ottawa RedBlacks Facebook

account had 48,643 followers on April 13, 2018, compared to 119,739 followers on Twitter.

Indeed, the ease of communication enabled by Twitter makes it an ideal platform for the co-creation of image and may also mean that Twitter users are more likely to expect a reply than users of other social media platforms due to increased message distribution (Castells, 2013). These characteristics also make Twitter an important platform in sport. The nature of the site and its 280-character limit means that Twitter usage can be a low cost means to project images to stakeholders (Abeza & O'Reilly, 2014; Gioia et al., 2014) while also offering the immediate action/interaction process (or discourse) that facilitates image co-creation (Gioia et al., 2014; Pratt, 2013). This co-creation is an essential part of emerging PR research, which requires a higher level of interaction between organizations and their stakeholders (Hernes, 2014; Langley, Smallman, Tsoukas, & Van de Ven, 2013).

While some have criticized Twitter research in sports, citing lack of theoretical sophistication, insufficient explanation of methods, and/or weak arguments for the merit or importance of the research, Sanderson (2014) suggests these concerns will diminish as the Twitter and sport research matures. Others, such as Hardin (2014), have criticized sport and social media research for its over-reliance on content analysis, and Filo et al. (2015) challenged researches to incorporate different critical frameworks, particularly from outside of sport, to advance the discipline. Hardin (2014) in particular suggested an increased focus on Twitter as a site of interaction and discourse around a wider sociocultural context, which this research does through the study of legitimacy-seeking and granting activities. Others have noted the limitations of the medium in promoting

meaningful conversation (Fuchs, 2014). Despite these challenges, online discussions and debate through sport Twitter accounts can take on importance beyond the field of play (O'Hallarn et al., 2018).

Some have questioned the focus on Twitter instead of other social media platforms. As noted on page 70, Facebook, LinkedIn, and Instagram consistently rank in the top three most-used social media platforms in North America. However, in a sport context, Twitter plays a larger role. In terms of social media channels used to house sport discussions, it moves up to third, behind Facebook and YouTube (Karr, 2017). Haugh and Watkins (2016) pointed that Twitter was the leading social media platform for fans wishing to gather information, seek entertainment, show support for a team, express opinions, and learn about rules and strategies pertaining to a sport.

Twitter has introduced a new form of content distribution to organizations (Castells, 2013) and indeed may supplant traditional media in sports (Hull & Lewis, 2014; Pedersen, 2014). It is difficult to find a sports team that does not have a presence on Twitter, and it has become integrated into most sport broadcasts, with many media organizations conducting Twitter polls or reading/displaying tweets during their broadcasts (Sanderson, 2014). Gibbs and Haynes (2013) noted that the advent of Twitter has changed the way sport PR is conducted. This is likely in part because the platform is designed more like a news feed than are other social media platforms. Furthermore, Twitter messages must be short and to the point, which allows Twitter posts about sports to "follow the action" in a game or event (Castells, 2013). Thus, OSEG's eight Twitter feeds were selected for the study.

Role of the Researcher

The researcher was the principle agent in securing the permissions required from OSEG administration and staff, arranging and conducting all interviews, and performing the data analysis on those interviews. Further, the researcher also secured and analyzed all Twitter data feeds from a netnographic perspective. No incentives were offered to participants, and no conflicts of interest existed.

Data Collection

As identified on page 94, three sources of data were associated with the research effort: semi-structured interviews requiring input from participants, documentation requiring documents from the organization, and observational netnography through Twitter. Further, semi-structured interviews were segregated by grouping internal and external stakeholders.

Interview Participants

Inclusion and exclusion criteria for the study were minimal. Each participant must have worked for OSEG, in a role outlined in Table 3.3, for a minimum of six months and not be involved in any current organizational or association-based sanctions or legal actions, such as employment equity actions or suspensions. The six-month criteria allowed employees sufficient time to understand and acclimatize to OSEG's culture. The sanctions or legal requirements were included because such actions might be sub judice and subject to due process. If the sanctions or legal requirements were not part of the criteria, it might lead to a skewing of results due to extreme contextual circumstances as well as being unethical. Representatives from both senior and junior job functions were interviewed. This was important because organizational communicated images are

created through all levels of the organization (Pratt, 2013), with many junior positions interacting as the “frontline” for organizational communication (Minkiewicz, Evans, Bridson, & Mavondo, 2011, p. 190). In total, nine executives and nine junior employees were included from OSEG as internal interview participants.

External stakeholder groups were identified through discussion between the researcher and the organization (Ackermann & Eden, 2011; see Table 3.3), resulting in 38 external interviews that involved fans (those who attend games), team supporter clubs (independent fan clubs of OSEG teams), government officials, community sport clubs (local youth), community groups, sponsors, media, social media leaders (those who post on OSEG team Twitter accounts more than twice per week), and league-affiliated personnel (league office, player’s union, other leagues or National Sport Organizations affiliated with the same sport as OSEG teams).

Table 3.2

Internal Stakeholder Interview List and Number of Interviews Conducted

Senior Representatives (9)	Junior Representatives (9)
Public Relations (2)	Public Relations (2)
Marketing (1)	Marketing (1)
Events/Guest Services (1)	Guest Services (1)
Digital (N/A as under marketing)	Digital (2)
Ticketing (1)	Ticketing (1)
Sponsor Relations (1)	Sponsor Relations (1)
Community Relations (1)	Community Relations (1)
Foundation (N/A)	Foundation (N/A)
Human Resources (1)	Human Resources (0)
President/CEO (1)	

Table 3.3

External Stakeholder Interview List and Number of Interviews Conducted

Representatives (34)
Municipal/City Government (2)
Fans (18 - 6 from each team)
Team Supporter Clubs (2)
Community Groups (2)
Sponsors (2)
Other teams in league/League Office/Players Association/National Sport Federation (4)
Media (4)
Social media community leaders (2)
Community Sport Clubs (2)

To provide clarity of perspective when reviewing the quotes while maintaining the ethical procedures and anonymity required for unbiased research, the following interview legend is provided for the quotes attributed hereafter (Table 3.4).

Table 3.4

Stakeholder Interview Legend

Internal Interviews	External Interviews
IS(1-9) Internal senior stakeholders	SC(1-2) Team supporter clubs
IJ(1-9) Internal junior stakeholders	CS(1-2) Community sport clubs
	CG(1-2) Community Groups
	MG(1-2) Municipal/City Government
	SP (1-2)SP(1-2) Sponsors
	FLS(1-2) (teams in league/League Fury Office/Players Association/National Sport Federation)
	RBLS (1-2) (teams in league/League RedBlacks Office/Players Association/National Sport Federation)
	M(1-4) Media
	SM(1-2) Social media community leader
	Fury(1-6) Ottawa Fury fans
	67s(1-6) Ottawa 67's fans
	RB(1-6) Ottawa RedBlacks fans

The total number of participants in the study was 54, which was more than the minimum number of participants usually needed to reach data saturation (Walker, 2012). Saturation is the point at which adding additional participants to a study no longer contributes new ideas. Unlike in quantitative research, data saturation is not defined by numbers (Daymon & Holloway, 2011). Thus, qualitative researchers do not go out to collect data based on prescribed numbers of interviews. They go out with a purpose based on their research questions created from the aims and objectives of the study, from which they design a data collection instrument. This could be a questionnaire, a focus group topic guide, or a semi-structured interview guide, as was used in this study (Appendix I).

In other words, the researcher seeks to answer the research questions, and once they have enough data to achieve this goal, data collection ceases. This occurs when the researcher begins to hear the same things being repeated in new interviews. Saturation points could be achieved in 10 interviews in one study and 50 interviews in another. There are no predefined numbers to determine data saturation. Instead, qualitative naturalistic enquiry seeks to explore the breadth of perceptions present in the population of interest (Walker, 2012). Interview participants were purposefully selected to help the researcher understand the problem and research question (Creswell, 2014). Purposive sampling helps to draw knowledge from the most informed sources within the organization (Weed, 2003). Interviews occurred between September 19, 2016, and November 25, 2016, and were conducted by phone or in person at a location chosen by the interviewee. The exceptions were fan interviews, which took place before and during the games at TD Place, specifically the Ottawa RedBlacks' game on October 7, 2016, versus the Saskatchewan Roughriders, the Ottawa 67's game October 8, 2016, versus the

Saginaw Spirit, and the Ottawa Fury's game October 9, 2016, versus the New York Cosmos.

The researcher digitally recorded, transcribed verbatim, and linked each interview to a participant (and a subsequent participant code) to ensure accuracy and participant anonymity, as suggested by Rubin and Rubin (2011) and Yin (2014). While some interviews were face-to-face, telephone interviews proved to be just as effective, as interviewees were free to choose their preferred medium and express their views spontaneously and dialogically (Novick, 2008). To mitigate any potential differences between the phone and face-to-face interviews, the researcher was conscious not to relay any non-verbal data through visual clues or to use any non-verbal data in the findings (Novick, 2008). Instead, the findings drew exclusively from the interview transcripts, regardless of the interview environment.

Participants required to answer the first research question were internal stakeholders of the organization, as they were the ones who articulated organizational identity to others in the organization, as well as to outside stakeholders (Gioia et al., 2000). Internal interview participants were selected based on their job responsibilities, as being most accountable for corporate identity creation and organizational image projection (see Table 3.2; Agyemang & Williams, 2013; Lock & Filo, 2012; Lock et al., 2013; Stoldt et al., 2012). As part of the agreement for participation in the study, OSEG wanted to be aware of which employees were being interviewed. Therefore, the researcher created a pool of potential participants, who were selected by job title and the inclusion/exclusion criteria required for the study. The criteria and pool of participants were provided to the CEO of OSEG. The CEO then contacted managers from their

respective departments to secure participant availability. To ensure some measure of confidentiality of participants, only the researcher knew which employees were contacted from the pool list for interviews. While this approach was not ideal and resulted in potential selection bias, it was the only way to ensure the co-operation of OSEG and was approved by the University of Ottawa ethics committee (Appendix I). To answer the second research question, information from the external stakeholders of OSEG and its three teams was required. External stakeholders were contacted by the researcher for recruitment until data saturation was reached (Creswell, 2014). In total, 36 external interviews were completed.

Documentation

Documents used in the study included brand guides for all three teams, which were five to twelve pages in length. These documents outlined how OSEG wished their teams to be perceived, and they included both brand and organizational image and personality language as well as standards for logo usage. They also included an internal staff presentation on organizational culture, an annual community relations report, an aggregated in-stadium OSEG fan survey report conducted with fans upon their exit from the stadium for every game of OSEG's teams during the 2016 to 2017 season prior to October 15, and the current OSEG Employee Manual, which numbered 36 pages. The documents requested and received are summarized in Table 3.3. While the documents are stable, can be viewed repeatedly, are unobtrusive, and make references to image and identity, either directly or indirectly, it should also be noted that there is a potential for prejudice, as the full collection of documents requested and received, whether intentional or not, was denied to the researcher, making this source of data incomplete (Yin, 2014).

Table 3.5

Document List

Documents Requested	Documents Received (pages)
Employee Handbook	Employee Handbook (36)
Fan/Community Surveys	Summary of Fan/Community Survey (2)
Marketing collateral for each team	Brand Identity Guides for each team (27)
Sponsor Packages for each team	Not provided
OSEG Strategic Plan	Not Provided
Marketing Plans for each team	N/A
Communication Plans for each team	N/A
Community Relations Plans for each team	Community Relations Activity Plan (4)

Twitter

Data collection — the second stage of the netnographic process — occurred over the course of several downloads using NCapture software. NCapture is an add-on optional feature of NVivo 11 that captures data from Facebook posts and Twitter feeds in a format suitable for database queries (tables containing fields and values [Hart & Taylor, 2013]). Eight Twitter Accounts were included in the study: each team's official Twitter account, each team's official mascot account, the TD Place (stadium) account, and the OSEG corporate account. The data were then imported from NCapture to NVivo.

The use of NCapture and other data collection applications is restricted by Twitter's Application Programming Interface or API, which limits the amount of Twitter data publicly available (Bošnjak, Oliveira, Martins, Mendes Rodrigues, & Sarmento, 2012). Thus, NCapture can fail to gather every single tweet retrospectively, depending on the amount of traffic on the user's account and on the number of tweets available (Abeza, O'Reilly, Séguin, & Nzindukiyimana, 2015). Therefore, a comparison of each set of data

captured and each live Twitter account feed was conducted to ensure that no tweets were missed and to retrace those found missing. During this process, the researcher manually coded replies to organizational tweets and retweets. This coding was done to capture the action/interaction process of dialogic communication as well as to view the online data in their natural setting, an important requirement of netnographic research.

The first download occurred on July 21, 2016, the day after OSEG agreed to be the focus of the study. Due to the extensive time required to compare and code the Twitter data taken by NCapture to the live Twitter account, some of the original downloaded data were no longer publicly available because of Twitter's streaming API restrictions. While Twitter's streaming API allowed the researcher to access the throughput of the Twitter accounts under study, it also limited the public availability of archived data on a rolling basis (Bošnjak et al., 2012). Accordingly, to capture more data that could be viewed online in its natural setting by the researcher, a second set of downloads occurred between the dates of September 19, 2016, and October 20, 2016. These dates were staggered based on the need to secure sufficient sizes of data due to the rolling API format.

Time periods of the tweets also varied due to the streaming API restrictions that Twitter applies to accounts based on their activity. For example, the RedBlacks Twitter account had the most followers and was the most active. Thus, available data extended back the least, allowing for a little over nine months of data capture. Conversely, the account for the Ottawa 67's mascot, "Riley," with only 325 followers, had the least activity and allowed for more than 28 months of data capture.

Due to the size of the data collection, a systematic sampling procedure was employed (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009). During the first data capture, Twitter accounts with 1,000 or fewer tweets and retweets were downloaded into NVivo through NCapture and coded. Twitter accounts that had between 1,000 and 2,000 tweets or retweets downloaded had every second tweet or retweet originating from OSEG coded. Twitter accounts that had more than 3,000 tweets downloaded had every third OSEG tweet or retweet coded. The same sampling process was followed in the second data capture for each Twitter account regardless of the number of tweets downloaded to maintain consistency. Table 3.6 shows the results of the systematic sampling process. Of the 18,657 tweets, retweets, and replies captured, 5,668 of these communications were included in the coded content, with some being coded to multiple codes if they sought multiple meanings through their image.

This data capture approach allowed for big-data capture of computer-mediated discourse as well as netnographic message interpretation within the messages' natural environment. This allowed the researcher to better answer the research questions (Wiedemann, 2013) by combining the advantages of both data collection techniques. Results of the data collection and sampling procedure can be seen in Table 3.6.

Table 3.6

Coded Tweets, Responses, and Retweets

Twitter Account	Twitter Handle	# of followers (last day of data pull)	Start of Data	End of Data	Total Tweets/RT in Data Period*	Total Tweets/RT Responses Coded*
OSEG	@OSEG_Corporate	1,889	Mar 15, 2013	Aug 25, 2015 *	607	409
Ottawa RedBlacks	@REDBLACKS	104,801	Dec 24, 2015	Sept. 19, 2016	2,775	829
Big Joe	@BigJoeGrandJos	1,859	Mar 28, 2014	Oct. 10, 2016	2223	947
Ottawa 67's	@Ottawa67sHockey	22,778	Aug 4, 2015	Oct 17, 2016	3,669	354
Riley the Raccoon	@67sRiley	325	May 29, 2014	Oct 19, 2016	686	649
Ottawa Fury	@OttawaFuryFC	14,001	Sept 22, 2015	Oct 20, 2016	4,212	1,248
Sparky	@SparkyFURY	530	April 22, 2014	Oct 20, 2016	1,037	551
TD Place	@TD_Place	7,508	Aug 30, 2014	Oct 1, 2016	3,448	1,021
Totals					18,657	5,668

*Last active day of Twitter account as was purposely deactivated by organization.

Data Analysis

Data analysis for the study consisted of two discrete data analysis methods. The first was thematic analysis of the semi-structured interviews and organizational documents. The second was a qualitative content analysis of OSEG's Twitter feeds, fulfilling the third phase of the netnography process. The rationale for using separate approaches for three types of data collected lay in the diverse nature of the data types and the needs of the study. Given the differences between the three types of primary data gathered for this study (interviews/documents and Twitter feeds), it was prudent to apply two discrete methods of data analysis to better analyze each data type. Thematic analysis was chosen for interviews because they require dialogical interaction with participants (Crotty, 1998). During interviews, the researcher freely responded to comments and requests for elaboration, allowing the researcher to understand and interpret participants' attitudes, beliefs and behaviours (Creswell, 2014).

Semi-structured interviews require an inductive approach to coding to identify recurring themes across multiple interviews (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Typically, thematic analysis requires the researcher to move through cycles of coding, going from the descriptive (participant-led) to interpretive (participant and researcher co-creation) to abstract thematic coding (researcher-only-led). A thematic analysis was also conducted on the documents to triangulate and compare themes identified in the documents with themes identified in the interviews.

Twitter feeds, by contrast, required an approach to systematically analyze content based on communication artifacts between stakeholders to uncover patterns and analyze social phenomena in a non-intrusive manner (Krippendorff, 2004). Content analysis was

chosen for Twitter feeds because the researcher was merely observing discourse between participants, with no direct input (refer to the description of observation netnography on page 98). Therefore, two approaches were used that were consistent with the needs of the study. Both sets of processes used in the data analysis are as follows:

Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis was performed on two of the three sources of data — the transcripts of the semi-structured interviews and the documents received from OSEG — as concepts of image, identity, and legitimacy were sought from both sources. Thematic analysis provided the flexible method of data analysis required to obtain an understanding of how stakeholders communicate the concepts of identity, image, and legitimacy (Lock et al., 2015).

The data, collected from the semi-structured interviews, were prepared by transcribing the audio recordings for each participant and assigning code names for the generated transcripts to protect the anonymity of the people or departments involved, allowing them to speak more openly about the topic at hand. For readability, the transcription process involved slight editing by removing redundancies and deleting inaudible responses, but not to the extent that it would change any meaning or nuances of the text. This was assured by member checking. Before the analysis was finalized, each participant received their interview transcript via email so they could provide feedback or clarification. Data collected from the documents provided by OSEG were prepared for analysis by labeling and organizing the data by source.

After data from the semi-structured interviews and OSEG documents were sufficiently prepared, all files were loaded into NVivo 11 qualitative data analysis

software. NVivo 11 assisted in storing and organizing the data in a structured way; it also assisted in the condensing and coding of data into topical themes (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 2002). Despite these features, the researcher remained the main source in the analysis of data, particularly in the determination of codes, categories, and themes, as suggested by Patton (2002).

Thematic analysis, as defined by Braun and Clarke (2006), required adherence to six stages and processes. Table 3.7 sets out those six stages and how they were implemented using NVivo. Cycles of coding are supported by codebooks in the appendices.

Table 3.7

Stages and Process Involved in Qualitative Analysis. Adapted from Braun and Clarke (2006) and Neumann and Krueger (2003).

Analytical Process (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Neumann & Kreuger, 2003)	Practical Application in NVivo	Strategic Objective	Iterative process throughout analysis
Familiarizing yourself with the data Interviews/Documents	Phase 1 – Transcribed semi-structure interviews, read and re-read transcriptions and OSEG documents, noting initial ideas	Data Management (Open and hierarchal coding through NVivo) ↓ Descriptive Accounts (Reordering, coding and annotating through NVIVO) ↓ Explanatory Accounts (Extrapolating deeper meaning, drafting summary statements and analytical memos through NVivo)	Assigning data to refined concepts to portray meaning ↓ Refining and distilling more abstract concepts ↓ Assigning data to themes/concepts to portray meaning ↓ Assigning meaning ↓ Finalizing themes and concepts
Open coding	Phase 2 – Generating Initial Codes - Coded interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion using the theoretical concepts of image, identity, and legitimacy From this, a codebook was developed: Appendix J		
Axial coding	Phase 3 – Supervisors provided feedback on codebook, which was revised. Searched for themes (categorization of codes) into broader groupings that were interrelated (potential themes): Appendix K		
Reviewing themes	Phase 4 – Checked the themes' relationships between the entire dataset, open coding, and axial coding		
Selective coding	Phase 5 – Defined remaining themes; on-going analysis to refine the specifics of each theme and develop an overall narrative along with selective quotes – Appendix L		
Producing the report	Phase 6 – Review of the three coding levels and notes taken during the during the data collection and analysis Ensured analysis relates back to the research question and literature		

This moved the researcher from the descriptive (participant-led) to the interpretive (a partnership between the researcher and participant, as the researcher brings their own knowledge and experience to bear and interprets data), to the abstract (researcher-led), where the researcher sets the primary data in dialogue with literature, policy, theoretical frameworks, and wider arenas generally, thereby facilitating comparisons between existing knowledge in extant literature and potential new knowledge emerging from the primary data analysis. Table 3.7 shows that thematic analysis is a process involving several planned phases specific to the method, which are designed to be self-correcting in nature.

Phase two, open coding, involved deconstructing the data from their original chronology into an initial set of non-hierarchical participant-led descriptive codes based on frequencies of recurring words and phrases to explore content with no references to any particular structure. Phase three, axial coding, involved merging, renaming, distilling, and clustering related codes into broader categories, reconstructing the data into a framework that allowed for further analysis while making it easier to address the research questions and aims of the study. In phase four, the axial codes were consolidated and mapped into top level themes, which were organized based on the research questions, allowing the researcher to review emerging themes. Phase five, selective coding, involved conceptually mapping and collapsing categories into a broader thematic framework to include sub-themes, offering a deeper understanding of the meanings within. Phases of coding are designed to be ideographic in nature. As such, these processes do not speak to general laws but nevertheless show that a rigorous and

systematic sequence of processes were observed, leading to findings that are trustworthy and plausible.

Qualitative Content Analysis

The third stage of observational netnography is analysis. Thus, a qualitative content analysis was performed on the third source of data, Twitter. Twitter data were captured and coded in such a way as to allow a content analysis, following the approach outlined by Krippendorff (2012). Table 3.8 is an illustration of the sequence, with a description of each stage's application within NVivo as well the strategic objectives of the various stages.

Table 3.8

Stages and Process Involved in Qualitative Content Analysis. Adapted from Krippendorff (2012).

Analytical Process (Krippendorff, 2012).	Krippendorff Practical Application in NVivo	Strategic Objective	Iterative process throughout analysis
What data are analyzed? How are they defined? What is the data set from which they are drawn? (Source: Eight OSEG Twitter accounts: @OSEG Corporate, @RedBlacks, @BigJoeGramdJos, @OttawaFuryFC; @SparkyFury, Ottawa 67sHockey, @67sRiley, @TD Place)	Phase 1: Using NCapture to download tweets, retweets, and responses into a single table for import into a computer-aided qualitative data analysis system (NVivo)	Data Management (Open and hierarchal coding through NVivo) ↓ Descriptive Accounts (Reordering, 'coding on' and annotating through NVIVO)	Who said what? ↕ Why did they say it? ↕ How did they say it?
What is the context relative to which the data are analyzed? (Encoding Process)	Phase 2 – Open Coding- Appendix N Phase 3 – Categorization of Codes-Appendix O Phase 4 – Coding on (reviewing code in its constituent parts to better understand meaning; drilling down)-Appendix P Phase 5 – Data Reduction/Consolidation- Appendix Q	↓ Explanatory Accounts (Extrapolating deeper meaning, drafting summary statements and analytical memos through NVivo)	↕ What inferences may be drawn? ↕ To whom did they say it
Exploring relationships and patterns across categories (Channel, Message, Recipient)	Phase 6: Generating Analytical Memos		↕ With what effect?
Integrating data to write findings (Decoding Process)	Phase 7 – Trustworthiness analytical memos Phase 8– synthesizing analytical memos		

The phases of coding described for the content analysis of the Twitter feeds were similar to phases deployed in the thematic analysis of interviews. Whereas there were some differences between the content analysis processes used by Krippendorff (2012) and the thematic analysis process of Braun and Clarke (2006) and Neumann and Krueger (2003), the objectives of coding described in column three remain similar through the encoding process, designed to move from descriptive to explanatory accounts, and are therefore the same in principle, resulting in a qualitative content analysis. Such analyses are not given to mathematical abstraction but are nonetheless systematic in their approach to data analysis.

During the encoding process described in Table 3.8, before each tweet or retweet (herein referred to as simply tweets) was coded, it was concurrently visualized, examined, and analyzed in its natural environment for context (per netnography's ethnographic roots) and content, such as embedded pictures and videos. In addition, each web link included in the tweet was followed. The researcher looked for emerging themes in the message content to gain insights into the way each tweet communicated its symbolic meaning related to image and legitimacy-seeking behaviour. These themes were then captured and coded, with each individual tweet utilized as embedded units of analysis.

Qualitative text interpretations are compatible with content analysis (Krippendorff, 2012) and have been used in marketing and communication studies (Daymon & Holloway, 2011). However, coding in such studies is not always mutually exclusive, as text may be interpreted to have multiple meanings (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). Thus, as social reality on Twitter is a discursive product and could contain

multiple thematic meanings, it was not always possible to create exclusive categories.

This type of non-exclusively coded qualitative content analysis is the norm in qualitative data coding and has been used previously in Twitter research (Heverin & Zach, 2010; Lee, DeCamp, Dredze, Chisolm, & Berger, 2014). However, a result of such an approach is that the coding could not be considered independent (Stemler, 2001).

In short, columns and rows could not be totaled, as the same tweet might be segmented to several codes, resulting in the total number of coded tweets not summing to the total number of overall tweets. For example, the tweet “@Ottawa67sHockey: Come see Team Canada's World Jr standout @TravisKonecny as he returns to @Ottawa67sHockey lineup Fri 7pm v Petes Sat 1 pm vs Miss @TD_Place” would be coded to the consolidated open codes of league/higher league/national team affiliation, athlete promotion, and team promotion.

As a result, findings could only be compared through within-row interpretations or non-summation column comparisons. While this constrained the findings by not allowing summative statistical analysis, it allowed the identification of salient qualitative themes across codes, which was more significant when compared to the potential for error or interpretation in the coding and analysis process through exclusive coding (Gomez, Baron, & Fiore-Silfvast, 2012). During this process, the researcher defined and modified code definitions using NVivo and made reflective field notes based on tweet text/context.

Critical events, patterns, and rhythms in the data were also identified during the content analysis, as these were a key part of process-theorizing (Langley, 1999; Pentland, 1999). Accessing data alone from online communities does not provide researchers with

obvious and definite events and trends, but it does provide markers of interest, such as PR issues or team performance, that can be identified by technical features (e.g., views, retweets, likes, etc.) and community action (frequency and length of discussion [Levina & Vaast, 2015]). A key to the research was understanding how these markers (emergent legitimacy dimensions) change in salience and meaning over time and can be used to pinpoint key events regarding image for the organization (Levina & Vaast, 2015)

This data capture approach complemented the earlier thematic analysis. The thematic analysis sought to understand the relationship between image and legitimacy, required for the first two research questions, while the qualitative content analysis helped explain the usage of these concepts on social media, required for the second two research questions. The content analysis also captured the legitimacy-seeking nature of organizational communication as well as expressions of conferred legitimacy on an organization by the public (Wehmeier, 2006).

Trustworthiness and Plausibility

Trustworthiness of processes leads to plausibility of findings (Krippendorff, 2012). Trustworthiness is established in part through an audit trail (clearly described processes consistent with guidelines from literature supported by outputs in the form of appendices [Krippendorff, 2004]). In this research, appendices included the codebooks resulting from the analysis processes outlined in Tables 3.6 and 3.7. Notwithstanding the rigour demonstrated in this study through its audit trail, Guba (1981) expanded on this, noting that trustworthiness is achieved when research demonstrates credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility is when the researcher

presents an accurate representation of a phenomenon and produces convincing results (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014).

To achieve credibility, a qualitative multi-method examination with multiple sources of data was conducted (interviews, documents, Twitter). To further enhance credibility, three pilot interviews were conducted at the beginning of the study to assure questions asked were neutral (i.e., non-directional language that does not lead or is evocative) and clearly worded (Creswell, 2014). The pilot review also assured that interviews were performed within the expected time period of 30 to 45 minutes to reduce response repetition and interviewee fatigue, which can occur if the interview runs longer than expected. Member checking was also performed. Before the analysis was finalized, each participant received their interview transcript via email so they could provide feedback or clarification.

To assist in coding credibility of the Twitter analysis, the researcher conducted a pilot study with a fellow graduate student. The pilot study used the first 150 entries in the dataset of one team and one mascot account. The two researchers each carried out the pilot analysis independently by reading and reviewing content such as pictures, videos, web links, and text, which included tweets, responses, hashtags, and mentions. Through discussions and clarifications, the researcher ensured that the student read and fully understood the literature and was familiarized with the data. Upon completion of the pilot study, emergent themes were compared and discussed until agreement upon the structure and nature of the coding framework was reached. The pilot study informed the analytical procedure applied to the rest of the dataset in terms of recording observations, use of reflective memos, and coding. The researcher also ran Twitter feed comparisons upon the

completion of each dataset. Throughout the process, the researcher continued to develop, clarify, and enhance emergent observations of the content analysis, recording observations within NVivo.

Transferability is the researcher's ability to define parameters for applying findings to other similar contexts (Guba, 1981). In each of the two interconnected stages, the researcher tried to identify the extent of transferability when discussing recommendations and conclusions. While single case studies have been criticized for being impossible to generalize, they may be transferable to theoretical propositions (Steenhuis & Bruijn, 2006; Yin, 2014).

Dependability is the consistency of the research processes (Miles et al., 2014). In this research, initial themes and theoretical underpinnings were discussed with the researcher's supervisors, peers, and other academics in the communications field. The researcher also presented initial findings to experts in sport management and communications at the 2014 PhD seminar at the European Public Relations and Research Association (Euprera), the 2015 and 2018 North American Society for Sport Management Conference (NASSM), and the 2017 and 2018 International Association for Communications and Sport (IACS) summits.

Finally, confirmability alludes to the potential impact of researcher bias on the results and conclusions drawn. The use of computer software for data analysis of interview transcripts and Twitter feeds made the encoding, retrieval, and reporting of the processes (the production of codebooks, for example) more transparent. This enhanced rigour, leading to greater plausibility of findings (Denscombe, 2014).

The dissertation supervisory process ensured constant monitoring by qualified and experienced academics at each stage of the aforementioned process; each stage was formally signed off as required. Because semi-structured interviews can be affected by the characteristics or beliefs of the interviewer (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007) and the philosophical underpinnings supporting qualitative methodologies (Lincoln & Gruba, 1985), objectivity was maintained only as much as is possible within a social constructivist paradigm. In recognition of this, the researcher performed a reflective bracketing interview prior to conducting interviews (Grbich, 2007) and attempted to maintain objectivity by taking on the posture of the professional outsider (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). Every effort was made to ensure all questions from the interview protocol were asked in the most consistent manner possible.

Ethical Procedures

All activities in the current study were approved by the Office of Research Ethics and Integrity at the University of Ottawa. Throughout the interview process, participants were only referred to by a combination of letters denoting the stakeholder group, plus an ordinal number. For example, stakeholders were referred to as IS1, MG2, and so forth. Additionally, all participants in the semi-structured interviews were required to sign an informed consent form prior to the interview (Appendix R), authorizing their inclusion in the study. Although the OSEG selected the pool of participants, they did not know whom the researcher selected to interview. Although there were relevant persons not selected by the organization as potential participants, this was a necessary limitation for the sake of site access. Those who were selected and elected to participate were reminded that their

participation was voluntary and without remuneration and that they could elect to terminate the interview at any time without duress or fear of reprisal.

While the public nature of Twitter provided few ethical concerns, no metadata were collected or maintained from any digital feed accessed. Further, data security of all hard copy and digital material related to this dissertation effort was maintained. All digital data were housed on one laptop computer owned by the researcher, with repeated backups performed on only two alternating flash drives. The laptop computer required password authorization for each use, with a time-out function set for two minutes. Flash drives and all hard copy data were secured in a locked facility at the University of Ottawa. No data were stored in a cloud facility.

CHAPTER 4: STUDY FINDINGS

Based on the research questions, the relevant theoretical framework needs to capture an organizational, team, and individual level of analysis, moving from the macro level (OSEG) to the mezzo level (the Ottawa RedBlacks, the Ottawa Fury, the Ottawa 67's) to the micro level (individual interactions on Twitter). This chapter contains an exploration of the relationship between organizational identity and organizational image in terms of legitimacy and the ways those perceptions of legitimacy are expressed, accepted, and empirically manifested in an online environment through Twitter.

Study One Findings

From the internal perspective, the researcher sought to grasp the ways OSEG understood image and legitimacy at both the organizational and team level. A similar process was repeated for external stakeholders of the organization. Findings were garnered from interviews and documentation and sought to answer the first two research questions.

Internal Perspective

An internal perspective of the concepts of identity, image, and legitimacy was required to answer the first research question: *How do organizational identity, organizational image influence, and organizational legitimacy interact internally in a sport organization in the social media world?*

As evidenced from the themes that emerged during internal interviews, participants saw brand and image development as overlapping concepts closely tied to the organization's identity and sense of legitimacy. In reviewing the interviews with internal stakeholders, it quickly became apparent that there was little distinction between team

brand and the organizational image of OSEG. When speaking about the teams directly, interview participants mentioned that the brand image of each team was unique.

However, further questioning revealed several common attributes that formed the foundation of these images regardless of which team was being discussed. This included i) being customer- and community-oriented; ii) being communicative and transparent; and iii) tradition-building and legacy.

This finding indicated the presence of a strong overarching organizational identity or self-image held by employees of OSEG, which was used to explain the organizational actions of its teams. At least one of the themes of i) customer and community orientation, ii) communication and transparency, and iii) tradition-building and legacy were evident in all 18 internal interviews, as well as the brand guides and employee handbook examined through the document analysis. Furthermore, these common elements are closely tied to their perceptions of legitimacy. This indicated that using a social theory approach to PR in which OSEG's legitimacy-seeking behaviour is the underlying driver of their image-seeking behaviour was appropriate, and it can be posited that in a co-creational approach to IM, the impetus to change identity is not through identity gaps (the discrepancy between the current and desired identity of an organization), as indicated by Reger and her colleagues (1994), but through the outward-facing legitimacy-seeking process that emerges through the negotiation of organizational image.

Brand and Image

Brand was not an initial focus of this study. It was an emergent idea that came to the fore during the data analysis. The brand guides and employee manual did not distinguish between brand and imagery. The individual brand guides also displayed many

commonalities. This observation partly explained why, from an internal perspective, most employees of the organization saw team brand and team image development as overlapping with the organization's identity across teams. One company employee noted seeing the image and brand of the teams, company, and stadium as overall the same:

I see them as the same. I mean, our team, the RedBlacks, whether it's the players on the field or the brand in the marketplace, is one and the same to me. And that's across all of our teams. And we do often utilize teams together — sometimes individually, but often together. And we utilize the power of the RedBlacks sometimes to integrate 67's and or Fury into school programs and other things.
(IE1)

In addition to viewing image and brand as interchangeable, the employee understood that team brand images, while viewed distinctly, were also interrelated.

Distinguishing team images. The perception of each team's image interdependence (or lack thereof) varied depending on context of the discussion. The research participants recognized the differences in understanding the various divisions of the organization and distinguishing the different teams within. They shared insight into when brands needed to be seen individually or as interrelated:

At the Fury, we really try to appeal to the "hipster" crowd, those that want to do a little something different. While the RedBlacks, they are different, it is all about the party atmosphere. And the 67's, we want to focus on families. But the fans of

the 67's, we know there are challenges. Our objective is to get them to speak more positively; we need to show the feeling is positive. For all three teams and OSEG, I keep hearing, "you guys are doing right," from the experience in the facilities, to things in the community. We want more people to know that, more people to hear that, across and between all our teams. (IS4)

The overall sense was an understanding that three distinct teams existed within the organization. All internal stakeholders cited ways in which each team had its own identity, mascot, image, fan base, and connection to the community:

I mean, that one's tough, because you really want to develop those core three team voices. You want to really develop the RedBlacks and 67's from the team perspective. And then the mascots as well. But I think it's less extensive on that side of things [the mascots]. (IJ6)

However, the respondents also acknowledged difficulty in finding a balance between the needs of the individual team images in relation to the other teams:

But I think that's important, but probably, it feels a little too much the same when we need to figure out what kind of, again, business we are. We're hip over here, maybe we're traditional over here, and the football team has a demographic that's mature. So, hip and edgy, but we need to get some of that in here to be relevant and grow our fan base. I think we need to figure out how to balance all this. (IE7)

Participants viewed team image and OSEG's image as distinct in some ways and as crossing over in others. As remarked by IJ1, "What we want is to bring people to games. We want those date nights, and we want to be family oriented. That goes to our goals across all the teams." This demonstrated that commonalities in image moved between teams, or, in other words, back and forth between the team and organizational level, wherein organizational characteristics permeated all of OSEG's teams.

Interrelated team images. IJ1 noted that the employees viewed the external perspective (construed image) as distinct but interrelated: "I think people see OSEG, and I think they know that it's all seen as part of one another." This demonstrates an understanding of the organization's construed image, intertwined with the way the organization's leaders understood themselves, and the different brands under the OSEG organizational umbrella:

I would say it's hand in hand, and I feel it's pretty similar, the brand being what the sport, the team, or the organization is, what it's about... Both of those brands are becoming very similar, I would think, and are attracting similar crowds... I think they are distinct but definitely a 100%; they may bleed into one another.
(IJ2)

The "bleeding" together of the teams and the organization was important from the organizational perspective. This importance came from how the the community, responding to one team positively or negatively, could affect another team and its

image/brand. However, this blending of team images also provided a synergy for team image development based on the overarching organizational identity (authentic projected image) of OSEG:

I think the RedBlacks is the one that has the strongest brand awareness within the market, which is awesome. I mean, that ultimately provides us with the opportunity to build awareness for the other two teams, but on the flip side, it also has the opportunity to overshadow both the 67's and the Fury, even though they are very different target fan bases. That's always a balance that you have to try to maintain. I think regarding, just because, again like the consistency of ticket sales for RedBlacks is very significantly different from 67's or the Fury. The public perception I guess is performance based on the Fury and 67's; typically they are viewed a little bit more, probably, negative. We're not doing, performing as well, because numbers are totally different. We're selling out RedBlacks games, but with the Fury, if we get 6,000 we're pretty happy. (IJ3)

This passage highlighted the delicate balance the organization must maintain between the image distinctions of each team. It also highlighted the use of an organizational level image perspective. At the team level, the RedBlacks were described as "the biggest party in town, and you want to be part of it" (IE7), while the 67's were described as "a great day out for the family" (IE1), and the Fury as "a unique soccer experience for hipsters, and immigrants who grew up with the game" (IJ6). Understanding when to use these differences or commonalities when communicating

with stakeholders appeared to require constant consideration and understanding of team image needs.

Convergent Team Image Characteristics

As this research viewed identity as a self-referential concept defined by members of the organization (Gioia et al., 2000) and image as the authentic outward expression of organizational identity appealing to the interests of external stakeholders (Lamertz et al., 2008; Scott & Lane, 2000; Taiminen et al., 2015), convergent team image characteristics may be considered OSEG's organizational identity. This identity was built on image characteristics that were present across all teams; namely i) customer- and community-oriented, ii) communicative and transparent, and iii) building tradition and legacy.

Customer- and community-oriented approach. Internal respondents saw their image development process across all teams as customer and stakeholder focused, indicating it was an organization-wide characteristic. In total, 13 of the 18 internal interviewees' responses involved an understanding of the organization's identity as being centered on a customer- and community-oriented approach:

I think we play a big role in the community, and we have a responsibility to it.

One of the things that I love about OSEG is all of the teams are very active in the community. The players are very active in the community. We do thousands of hours of community service. I think we have a big responsibility. I think the community looks at us and looks at our teams and maybe more specifically our players as needing to be role models, looking to be good community citizens.

(IE1)

The language of the brand guides also indicated the desire for teams to be embedded in the community and culture of Ottawa. For example, the Ottawa Fury brand guide stated, “We are engaged, form strong allegiances and are loyal to our teammates, coaches, city, and fans. We believe in giving back, and are a valued member of the community” (p.6). The RedBlacks brand guide noted, “We recognize the importance of engaging with our fans, being loyal, and staying ahead of the curve” (p.3).

In the employee manual, OSEG described their vision regarding the community as follows: “to make our community a better place in which to live by respecting and reflecting community values and by promoting the benefits of participation in sports and an active, healthy lifestyle” (p.8). Their language articulated what success represented; the drive for success meant connecting with the team's fans and the city at large. OSEG employees, as noted by IJ2, adopted these identity values and believe they are reflective of the values of their community:

I feel like we have very strong values. A lot of it is teamwork, passion, and the fans that we do attract. And the public that has come to our events, they definitely share those same values, and I think we definitely have a great group of people who translate those values into the work that is done here and into the community as well. (IJ2)

These values indicated that the organization’s identity centered on the understanding that not everything could be profit-driven within the organization. IE1

remarked, “I think every decision can’t be evaluated just on dollars and cents, or what’s the easier path to get through this particular thing and move on. Everything has to be looked at with a long-term view.” This concept was reiterated by IJ3:

I think ultimately the one thing we try to do as an organization, from an OSEG perspective, is we’re not just here to field a team. We try to make sure that we’re involved in the grass roots initiatives within the community, working close with the city, with whatever initiative where we can. And I think that’s something our executive team communicates often, and that should always be a priority. (IJ3)

Having a customer- and community-oriented approach was seen as a requirement for the profitability of the company. IJ3 also remarked, “While I think ultimately, it’s selling tickets, it’s filling seats so that we can constantly do what we’re doing... The next is, ultimately, the experience we have in the stands because of our fan base.”

OSEG believed that the community perceived them the same way (construed image) and that they created relationships through having their values reflect those of the greater community:

I think that the community sees us in the same sense. We have a lot of different groups of people that come here for many different reasons, and we always want to make sure that we know why people are coming, and it helps us ensure the reason that we are catering too, to make sure that whether someone is closing a business deal, or whether someone’s birthday is happening, that everyone is

essentially celebrating it [the event] and celebrating for their own reasons at this event, so these events are perceived as positive by them, and I think the community has grasped that. We are really just trying to give everyone a good time no matter what the occasion is, no matter what the reason for coming to the event is. (IJ2)

This passage also demonstrated that OSEG believed creating a social gathering place for Ottawa, regardless of their reason for attending an event, was one of their primary services to the community. They believed their ties to the community were also economical, as noted by a participant:

I think also with bringing the large-scale events like AC/DC [concert] to our city, we're adding and working toward supporting our community initiatives for tourism in Ottawa. I think also, being a venue, we're a location that a lot of larger events can happen here, so we can contribute to that [to the community] from an economical side of it. Not just from a grass roots initiative and community base. (IJ3)

Respondents also pointed out that the building of a sustainable image was the priority. They believed this sustainability would be achieved through building a team image with a customer and client focus:

That they [the Fury] are a pro-team, like others in OSEG, that should be the focus, and that to keep that [team] in Ottawa; that it's a sustainable model to keep, because it's not easy, and it's going to take time, and I think it's important to have community engagement. (IJ2)

This concept was reiterated in the passage below, which showed the importance of OSEG's focus on fans and ensuring that their messaging was direct and accessible:

I think a lot of it on the Fury side of things comes from just developing, trying to get a clear image of what it [the team] is. So we start out and maybe become a little bit more wide open in terms of how we talk about [the team] or how it looks and how it's portrayed as we try different things. And then, as we try to learn and use some of the data to really drill in on what's resonating with fans, then we kind of zoom in on a few of those things and really cut into the layers so we get less complex with it [simplify the message]. (IJ6)

These practices were mentioned when speaking broadly about all the teams, indicating that the idea of being communicative and listening to external stakeholders, fans in particular, was ingrained in OSEG's culture.

Communicative and transparent. Part of building their relationship with the community was being communicative and transparent in expressing values through all levels of the organization and its teams:

We can't just take; we have to give. So that applies to social media, that applies to community, that applies to the experience that we give at a game, that we have always got to give back and give our community and our fans reasons to give more to us. It's just like a cycle, and making memories and being ingrained in the community is hugely important. Just like in the most successful franchises across whatever sport it may be, they are ingrained in the community. Like in Saskatchewan [Roughriders, another CFL football team], they bleed green ... it's connecting in that one-to-one level, it's huge in the social media and in the community. (IJ7)

They also acknowledged that listening and understanding community needs were part of the organization's role and identity. From their perspective, "It's just listening to people and fostering, you know, there's a trust that they have, I think, in us that we're sincere about, we're sincerely asking for their opinion on stuff" (IE7).

This was part of OSEG's early identity, as demonstrated when they received negative feedback from the local community due to worries that the stadium and subsequent influx of people would change the character of the community, affecting local businesses and straining infrastructure in terms of traffic and parking. As one OSEG employee noted in their interview,

People in the Glebe [the neighborhood surrounding the stadium] originally weren't too happy with the way the site was going, and we still combat that on probably a weekly basis — like, there is too much traffic, or there is not a good

enough use of the green space, or the games are too loud, and things like that.

That's a big challenge, controlling the public perception of Landsdowne and TD Place Stadium in general. (IJ8).

In short, some of the residents of the Glebe felt that their concerns were not being heard or addressed, and, as IS8 observed, they expressed their feelings by "bringing their issues to the attention of the media and using social media to organize gatherings, picketing, or protests at City Hall."

In line with its communicative identity, OSEG responded by hosting town halls to address the concerns of the community; keeping residents abreast of the stadium construction developments through their website and social media; and meeting one-on-one with government stakeholders to provide updates on their legitimacy-seeking activities with the Glebe community.

OSEG's cultural values drove their sense of identity, encouraging them to engage in family-oriented, kid friendly, and charitable community activities. The organization's efforts to connect in the community encompassed all teams. Their community-based programs reached out to families, schools, and other community organizations. One participant provided an outline of how the programs, teams, and organization played a role in linking the organization to the community:

I think that our programs we do; one of the big programs that we do is our Team Up program, where different sponsors will buy tickets for a community organization ... I think we do a really nice job across all three teams. Trying to get the mascots out to different community events, out to schools, and players are

a whole other piece, but we also do a lot with the players. We do a lot more with the players, so when I see how active our players are and how much they go out to different community events, I'm really impressed by that, and I think people appreciate that a lot. (IJ4)

Transparency was also acknowledged as important when communicating:

I feel that's [image] more looking to develop people; not to spin a story or to portray something [like PR], but it's an ongoing process of developing an image and a culture within your organization for the community to kind of perceive you in more of a real way, because it's not always perfect, so it's always an ongoing process of managing internally how people are, and then how the public sees you. I think it just seems a little more real. (IJ1)

Employees also understood that it takes time to build relationships based on expressed community values and transparent communication. These relationships also required them to create a sense of tradition with stakeholders, encouraging them to accept the young organization's emerging identity. As IS8 described it, "I think with the RedBlacks, the image is of something new built off a longstanding tradition in Ottawa. So I think, when you think RedBlacks, you have to think about the proud football teams in the past and then try to communicate the new traditions we are trying to build." This idea was reiterated by IJ3, who stated, "The Fury is a pretty new franchise, and we need to find ways to develop and build traditions."

Tradition-building and legacy. While the organization's identity connected heavily to the community and transparent communication, participants also explained that the relationship needed to be constant:

It's just like a cycle, and making memories and being ingrained in the community is hugely important; just like in the most successful franchises across whatever sport it may be, they are ingrained in the community. (IJ7)

This was expressed through awareness of the need to create traditions around teams:

I think we are a stable organization now, and I think we have proven that to all the stakeholders, and because of that they believe in the Ottawa Sports and Entertainment Group. (IS4)

Through traditions, the organization was building a stable connection and a legacy interwoven with the social fabric of the city of Ottawa. Participants noted that relationship-building established the organizational image and deeper connections to the community. IE1 pointed out the necessity of separating a pure profit-driven approach from establishing a positive legacy, or tradition, with the community:

Is our interest to maximize every single cent in ticket revenue for the Grey Cup because we're quite confident this game will sell out, or is it to continue to treat

our loyal fans the right way so that they feel like they're getting appropriate value and going to be around for another 10 years? (IE1)

OSEG employees believed one must balance the difference among those success perspectives, because establishing a relationship with the community meant future revenue as fans returned to games. This concept illustrated the organization's perspective of building the business and the fanbase long-term. That part of OSEG's identity is derived from building a tradition through their image, one centered in the city and community:

I think right now that the purpose of what we are doing is to create a legacy for the city of Ottawa here, and I think we have got the right start in order to make that happen, and now it's time to go bigger, to expand. One of the areas I think we can expand most in is to just broaden our purpose to the city of Ottawa, to be community-focused, specifically a [charitable] foundation. (IJ4)

As a young organization, OSEG has tried to establish and build new traditions, something that would distinguish them from past unsuccessful CFL franchises in the city, and establish the Fury as part of the Ottawa professional sport landscape. Within the Ottawa RedBlacks brand guide, it was noted that OSEG wished to "build and reflect upon Ottawa's sporting and football tradition" (p.3). The Ottawa Fury brand guide stated the following: "The Ottawa Fury FC believe in soccer traditions and keeping the game pure" (p.4). They hoped that reminding stakeholders of sport traditions and building new

traditions over time would strengthen their relationship with the city and the surrounding community by re-enforcing and developing a shared history. This is summarized in the RedBlacks brand platform statement in their brand guide: “The Ottawa RedBlacks, while respectfully honouring the placing value on those teams that came before them, are a forward thinking, tough, competitive, organization looking to the future of CFL football in the Nation’s Capital. (p.4)”

They found that relying on tradition was successful in building relationships with their junior hockey team, which was well established in Ottawa:

Like I said, the 67’s lean on the history. This is the value of still having someone like Brian Kilrea [former 67’s coach and general manager] there, who’s a hall-of-famer, and that has a kind of a priceless value to the community. (IJ5)

Part of the tradition they tried to build came directly from their fans:

A lot of our marketing initiatives and a lot of our communication taglines or whatever from a marketing perspective, we’re just kind of taking from what is already happening within the bowl or within the stadium and pushing it out. I think ultimately we’re just really fortunate that the community has embraced us when we came back a few back years ago, and they are kind of sticking around and supporting us. If we didn’t have their support, however, we would not still be here. (IJ3)

Perspective-driven. Participants' responses also reflected an understanding of different team needs, when to emphasize differences between teams, and when to capitalize on the positive attributes of OSEG's image. The decision of when to emphasize one or the other was perspective-driven. It came from the employees' understanding of what was required of team image from an audience perspective, as well as the best way to share that image perspective. While each team image was viewed as distinct, there was also acknowledgment of the benefit of associations with the global OSEG image:

I think we want them to bleed onto each other, for sure, because I think there's a credibility element that goes with OSEG that kind of permeates all of this. I think that's an important thing, particularly when we fall down from time to time doing something. We get the benefit of the doubt that OSEG will look after that, we're not... I don't think it's strong, but it will grow over time. (IE7)

Being perspective-driven provided strength to each team's overall credibility.

Image role in the organization. The participants discussed a sense of collective responsibility regarding leadership and accountability of IM and PR. From the junior internal perspective, "I think anyway it's everybody, and I think it comes from the top, from a CEO, from our ownership; breaking down to everybody, it is not more specific to departments in dealing with the silos instead of the public" (IE8). Everyone was part of the process:

Again, it's everyone involved for sure, but it's also you are not expecting everyone to be a certain way; it's not like a public relations department is responsible for this, and this is what we put out there. I guess that image management is actually more of a collective responsibility. (IJ1)

Each person had a critical role to play to facilitate the functioning of the organization:

I'm a sales guy, so my answer on that [responsible for image] is actually everyone. We corporately have a mantra: one team, one vision — something I preach quite often across the board with everybody here. Certainly, there are departments and there are people who are directly responsible for public relations or image management, but that is their day-to-day job; they do that, and we have people who have got that defined as their role. (IJ4)

Senior executives echoed this sentiment of shared responsibility for image management:

Well, everybody. And in a business like ours, in our business, it is absolutely every touch point that we have with a visitor to this site [stadium]. You like to make those motherhood statements, like who's responsible for safety, just look in the mirror, like all that kind of stuff. That's typically how I try to do things, but in business, you also set up functional experts that make sure things happen in an

organization, whether it's the place being cleaned today? Well, we are all responsible for that, but we also have a cleaning department. Are we getting our messages out today? Well, that's everybody's responsibility, but we have a marketing department, we have a communications department. It is about how you deal with your every single little encounter with a customer, a visitor, a guest, a fan. (IE2)

The collective responsibility for image development and collaboration on communication is built from the top down. This collaboration was important, because each person must understand his or her role in the image presented by the organization. Knowing their role and having a sense of collective responsibility connected directly to the organization's ability to communicate images effectively. Having a perspective-based customer/stakeholder focus about team image united the organization's behaviour toward consistent and targeted communication:

I think image management, brand management, how you manage your image, I've always been very sensitive to that, as I've been the CEO of different companies, I've been the CEO of a public company, and I used to think of that as our brand, and how we are communicating, conveying our brand on a consistent basis to the public. (IE2)

Another participant reiterated the same message that each of those elements was part of the brand development and execution:

Ultimately, I think they support each other [image and brand], and public relations is just one of those channels that you tend to utilize if it's appropriate and when it's appropriate. In order of who is in charge of it, I think it really matters on what you're looking to execute. I think ultimately PR traditionally comes from the comms [communication] side just regarding... It tends to be a little bit more content focused, as well as the message and key messaging needs to be aligned with what the general messages or objectives are for the campaign. (IJ3)

Connecting these elements provided an understanding of OSEG's identity and messaging. IJ6 suggested these behaviours contributed to the consistency of the organization's image-development messaging: "I think we've gone ahead and gotten stronger with it. And sort of built this concept of 'R' nation [name for the fanbase] and the games as kind of the party place to be."

While IM was viewed as a collective responsibility, there was also some confusion of the PR role within the organizational image construct. Some viewed IM as part of PR: "I would see image management as something that falls under the greater umbrella of public relations" (IJ5). However, the majority viewed IM as more of the "holistic human face of the organization, not so direct as PR, which tries to spin a story or portray something specifically" (IJ1). Overall, 13 of the 18 internal interviews indicated that they viewed PR as a specific implementation tool of IM within the organization.

I see them [PR and IM] as working together. There are multiple silos in which PR helps image perception flow; there is your media stream and your spokespeople

on staff, and when used on the marketing side, it is the publicity stunts you do to get your message out there. I think PR directs the messaging that supports image. But I also think that where image management is concerned, you don't have complete control of it, where with public relations you are kind of driving the bus on the type of messaging you put out there. (IE4)

Such a view was echoed by IE5, who stated, "Organizational image management would be global, and PR would be the micro." This view did not vary by position held by the interviewees, with six of nine junior employees and four of nine executives viewing PR in such a manner.

Despite the ambiguity of the role of PR in IM, the broad themes about customer and community-oriented approaches, expressed through transparent communications to build traditions and legacies, formed the core of the organization's identity. These were the integral, organization-wide concepts that OSEG understood as necessary for corporate social performance or by OSEG seeking approval from society in their image projections (i.e., their *license* to operate). These characteristics were illustrated in the organization's objective to combine profit focus with integration into the Ottawa community through long-term relationships based on shared values (the meanings and principles of the team image and goals in the community). In addition, the organization, including teams, staff, and leadership, played different roles in the community by providing services and links to these perceived shared values. Hence, communicating image was a shared responsibility. In turn, this responsibility drove the organization's perceptions of legitimacy.

Legitimacy. Aspects of OSEG's internal identity, which formed the holistic core of its image across teams, overlapped closely with themes of organizational legitimacy identified by employees. For this research, organizational legitimacy is thought of as the socially acceptable behaviour of an organization that is consistent with societally defined values and norms (Suchman, 1995). Such an understanding was consistent with internal stakeholder views of legitimacy, with all 18 interviewed noting an organizational need to meet public and stakeholder expectations:

Legitimacy would be that they [a sport organization] are following rules and they are keeping... Like for us, for instance, we are legitimate, we are following OHL and NASL and CFL rules and procedures. We abide by anything, the processes, the programs that we need to do, to be able to be a part of those other organizations. (IJ2)

Internal stakeholders noted that legitimacy was context specific and could not be boiled down to a single element.

So I see legitimacy in sort of phases, and each built on the next, and the truly legitimate team has put all those together and has a whole package. So from time to time, some things are going to have two or three of the four criteria of legitimacy. Some teams will have it all. It just depends, but that's sort of how I view it. If it's a legitimate team to me, they got the whole package together from on-ice to off-ice. And then communication, both online or in person, like, that's

big for me too. I want to see a team that is responsive and will engage with the community. So all that, when you combine together, just adds different levels of legitimacy to the team. (IJ9)

Legitimacy was viewed as developing a relationship with the community. The main subthemes emerging from the coding process were i) communication and accessibility, and ii) transparency, trust, and time.

Communication and accessibility. When asked what makes an organization legitimate, interview participants responded with communication and responsiveness by the organization. OSEG built its communication capability over time, and this capability helped build its relationships with stakeholders, as highlighted by the following statement:

We are in the process for the past year of trying to create relationships and talk and communicate with stakeholders, and now I feel like we are in the transition where we are making those relationships, so I feel like we are doing something right, and I feel like now other organizations and other people can count on us and perceive us as being a stable organization, where we are worth putting the time in and creating that relationship with. (IJ2)

The following passage exemplifies the organizational perspective on how they view communication as part of legitimacy:

Communication is part of legitimacy, and I feel like this is one of the strongest communication organizations that I've really been around. From interpersonal, from mass team communicating, we communicate at every level. Management does not have closed doors, and that communication flow goes right to our fans. I think we do a good job of responding. (IJ6)

Essentially, the company viewed communication as critical to legitimacy. The interviews also reiterated the importance of accessibility (i.e., the ease with which fans communicate with OSEG) as a part of that communication:

I think all three teams are fairly accessible. I think ultimately it's a common ground, that if we're trying to make them accessible, it is traditionally for their [fans] benefit. To help increase the awareness or knowledge of their fan base, or a team to increase their fan base. Maybe we get some push back [from athletes], but that's the life of dealing with athletes. From my experience, we have a lot of accessibility to our teams, but it's not perfect, and it will never be, because you're dealing with professional athletes and coaches. (IJ3)

This passage reiterated the importance of availability from all parts of the organization, including both on- and off-field staff. However, they also acknowledged that the process remains constantly under development. Overall, the organization's communication and responsiveness continues to grow. Another participant reiterated this point:

I feel like we do a pretty good job. We give information to them quickly and [have] great relationships with the press, and I feel like we try to do the right thing. I feel like we are not in any news maliciously, and it's more for us, it's more due to experience, people's perception is what we are always playing for them and inviting them in. (IE3)

The organization recognized the importance of communicating a clear message by providing timely responses to meet the societal expectations associated with legitimacy, thereby increasing its social performance in the community. Clear, timely responses were believed to lead to positive sociopolitical judgment evaluations among stakeholders; in other words, external stakeholders would make positive evaluations of the organization's legitimacy in the community (Biketine, 2011; Lock et al., 2015). In discussing communication and accessibility, interviewees relayed a strong sense of communication as an ongoing truthful process, demonstrating an understanding of legitimacy as having the dimensions of transparency, trust, and time.

Transparency, trust, and time. Participants stated that legitimacy, in a sports organization, is linked to how credible and consistent the organization appears, as well as how they follow the rules of society (i.e., societal norms and expectations). This credibility and consistency were viewed as repeating the same actions or communicating similar images.

You know, we're committed to professional soccer in Ottawa and finding the way to fortify the team in terms of its fan base, make it a viable business. So is the perception that we're stable? I certainly hope so. We are showing through our

activities that we are committed to the community and providing that opportunity for people to enjoy themselves, to feel part of the team, and that our team is part of the community, and that is certainly going to continue. (IE6)

This consistent relationship-building process suggests that the elements of transparency, trust, and time are necessary. Their belief was that legitimacy rested on the organization building relationships with stakeholders and establishing a real connection with the community. These relationships needed to be authentic (i.e., genuine, transparent):

We're in the community, we're at community practices, and you know, it's an authentic caring. It's a giving back effort. It's not, I don't call it perception management, but with the media, it's somewhat different. You do try to manage the perceptions through the media. Yeah. And that's not the case in terms of dealing with the general public. You're not trying to pull one over, you're doing quite the opposite. It's almost like you are opening the team to the commons, to let them see who you really are, and that's, you know, that's the difference. (IE6)

Authentic relationships are related to another of OSEG's perceived aspects of legitimacy, one centered on trust:

I definitely think we are trustworthy for sure. I think we are dependable. I feel like, as I mentioned earlier, that we do go through a lot of changes, but we are

very good at ensuring that people are aware of them. But I feel that overall we are very trustworthy and dependable in terms of our organization. (IJ2)

Transparency and trust developed over time as the organization created relationships with stakeholders and the community:

We do not have some owners who fly in from another town and will do Mardi Gras nights and all sorts of crazy things like that. I think we are a stable organization now, and I think we have proven that to all the stakeholders, and because of that they believe in the Ottawa Sports and Entertainment Group. I think that's one thing, and then the second thing was — is Lansdowne, that we really got that Lansdowne experience right. I think people come down here now, and they really like what they see, and people, they can even see our financial statements for instance based on — well, *elements* of our financial statements, because of our partnership with the city. All that said, they are seeing profits and losses, and they are seeing some of those numbers, so I think it's given confidence to all the stakeholders. (IJ4)

Time was seen as an aspect of legitimacy, because legitimacy is often built by maintaining positive relationships over more than one interaction. In the interviews, this was often referred to as consistency and credibility:

I think it's maybe tied to credibility, like are we seen as a strong, well-run, a well-managed organization that is stable, that has a bright future? I think all of those things kind of play into legitimacy. I think we are on the right track on most of those things, and I think our perception in the market place is that we are a legitimate, well-run organization that has a bright future. (IE1)

This sense of viewing legitimacy as building credibility over time was also noted when speaking about some of the early troubles the organization experienced:

With the passage of time, I think OSEG has become more credible, more relevant in the community. When we were building the stadium, maybe not the majority, but certainly a large portion of the community was not entirely [trusting] of us, thinking we were developers taking the city for a ride. That constituent has virtually disappeared. I think that over the course of the last few years, the number of people that feel that we are well intentioned, committed, honest, and stable would be more of the majority of the way people perceive OSEG in the community now. (IE3)

Building consistency and credibility also depends on how well the organization built its relationship and connection to the community and stakeholders. The internal interviews revealed a strong sense of the importance of connecting with the community and providing a sense of stability, tradition-building, and legacy when discussing legitimacy. From IJ5's perspective, this stability was how he perceived legitimacy for OSEG:

There was so little stability for the sport of football in Ottawa for a long time, the stability that this company exudes right now, and people, as I said, working there right now, part-time students and people working summer jobs, it's a place that people seek out now for employment, and when you see people flocking to a place and want to work there, that shows that it's seen as a legitimate player. When you tell friends and family where you work, and you have work friends [at OSEG], that's when you know it a place which is going to be around for a while. (IJ5)

This statement summarized the organization's belief that stability and strong, favourable ties to the community helped establish legitimacy. This portrayal was tied to how credible the organization appeared and was also discussed in terms of conduct and image as being *professional*:

You are in a position of authority, so you have to portray that right; portray what you say outwards, like what your values are, and what you are about, like you are a pro and you are a professional, and this is what it means to be professional, and this is how we conduct ourselves. (IJ1)

This passage pointed to the observation that began the analysis of OSEG's perception of legitimacy, which was intertwined with OSEG's projections of their image: professional, stable, and credible. The findings showed a company strengthening its legitimacy by communicating openly with their stakeholders and continually working to

establish trust and transparency over an extended period. It also showed, from their perspective (construed image), that OSEG believed the community had accepted the organization as legitimate and trustworthy as a result of their ongoing communication and community integrating efforts.

PR and IM. When discussing PR's role within organizational IM, it is also important to note a lack of consensus among interviewees. Some viewed PR as a broad management discipline that included IM. For example, IJ5 commented, "I would see image management as something that falls under the greater umbrella of public relations." This sentiment was echoed by IE6, who said, "Public relations is a broader field. I would say that's much more of a management area, that you try to manage perceptions through all touchpoints with fans, whether through the media, online, or at the stadium itself."

Others viewed PR from a more technical perspective, as an enactment or tool of IM:

I think public relations is a component of image management. But public relations to me is kind of the public sentiment about our brands, our teams, our product. So it's the way we interact with stakeholders, media, and others to position ourselves in the marketplace. Public relations is managing the message, the images, through the media, the public, channels of communication, to our target audiences. (IE1)

Regardless of the perspective used by internal stakeholders, one common denominator emerged: that PR involved stakeholder interactions. IJ2 stated, "Public

relations to me, I think, ultimately means kind of a more personal perspective of marketing and advertising. It just lets you get your message out there through different means.” This was further explained by an OSEG executive:

Public relations is the interaction that you have with your various constituencies and they have with you. It’s to create a dialogue, to convey your messages, to deal with issues that may come up both proactively from an out-bound sense and reactively for inbound issues that may come up. It is to try and understand the concerns that people may have about your organization. You know, how can you better serve them, or how can you, in our case, make them feel better? So I would say the main thing is that dialogue. Being able to understand them and they you.

(IE6)

External Perspective

Image understandings from external stakeholders, i.e., those outside the organization, were necessary to uncover potential identity gaps (Reger et al., 1994) and their causes. The minimization of those identity gaps is a key requirement of a co-creational approach to IM and legitimacy understanding. Information gleaned from the external stakeholder interviews also sought to illuminate if OSEG had changed the meaning of its identity labels to meet society expectations, as proposed by Gioia et al. (2013, 2014). Thus, the research first sought to understand if external stakeholders viewed OSEG and its teams as distinct or interconnected.

Results found that, much like the internal findings, external images were perspective-driven in terms of distinctiveness versus interconnectedness and varied based on context. From the government perspective, responses reflected a belief that the teams and organization were distinct entities from the fan perspective. However, because they focused more on the financial side of the partnership, their professional perspective did not include them as distinct entities themselves:

We don't see them as separate, because we're part of the limited partnership. We get to see parts of OSEG that perhaps your average community person wouldn't see, with the connection between the limited partnership, the teams, and the commercial side of the operation, so we see them as kind of a critical financial part of making the whole engine run type of thing [Lansdowne and the teams], and we've built into our site agreements. Just about every agreement reflects the primacy of making the site work for sports, like game days. You know on a RedBlacks game day, everything falls aside to make sure RedBlacks are going to work. And that is reflected in how we work with them and how we support them that way. (MG1)

Sponsor responses reiterated this perspective, reflecting a belief that fans hold distinct images of teams. SP2 noted that the 67's "have always been an appeal to young families," while the RedBlacks were "the best party in town on that night." However, given they dealt directly with OSEG, sponsor participants noted they also considered the organization from a single entity perspective: "We deal largely at the organizational level, so really, our primary relationship is with the sponsorship/partnership team and

leadership, because we try to look at our support much more holistically than simply team-based” (SP1).

Such expressions were consistent among OSEG’s sponsors regardless of whether the interviewee was a sponsor of a single team, two teams, or all three teams. This perspective is congruent with OSEG’s sponsorship philosophy, where potential sponsors are approached with a holistic view of integrating and finding synergies across all three teams, with the majority of sponsors being involved in more than one team (B. Dhillon, personal communication, June 23, 2018). All sponsor stakeholders spoke of the business side of their relationship in terms of OSEG and their professionalism rather than in terms of individual teams. As SP1 noted, “There is a certain pride associated with our partnership with OSEG and its teams, regardless of which team we associate with.”

Different league and sport stakeholders held a more varied perspective on team imagery and their distinction from OSEG based on the context of their relationship and the objectives they sought to achieve. For example, one sport stakeholder of the Fury, whose relationship with the team was to primarily build awareness of the sport and did not have a direct financial interest in the team, did not view all the teams as one entity under OSEG, but the stakeholder acknowledged the potential for the identities of the teams and the organization to overlap in some contexts:

I don’t see them as one. But I know how OSEG impacts the Fury, but that is because of me and my role. And I think that from a branding point of view, the Fury certainly stand on their own. But at the end of the day, I know they [the Fury] don’t have the control of how they are viewed based on the structure they

have. So, it might sound a bit cynical or skeptical, but that's just my reality.

(FLS1)

However, league stakeholders with a direct financial relationship with a team (i.e., they would be financially affected if the team ceased to exist, such as the CFL if the RedBlacks were to shutter operations) primarily viewed the team and OSEG as one stakeholder. As one football stakeholder succinctly put it, "I see them as one entity" (RBLS2). Another league stakeholder with a direct financial interest in the Fury gave a more nuanced response:

I don't think the Fury exist as they are in this iteration without OSEG. I see the Fury as a branch of OSEG, an extension. When I think of OSEG, it really is just a truly good group of people beginning with, you know, the upper management. They are just pleasant people to be around, and they create a nice environment. It's very clear that they are busy and have a lot going on up there. I know that it's a business, and they have the conglomerate angle, that they are working with all these entities, teams, the venue, to use together. It creates a synergy that works, and that model has been proven in the US and has been proven with Maple Leaf's Sports and Entertainment up in Canada. (FLS2)

For the media, the responses reflected ways in which the participants interacted with the organization and its different teams. M1 reported seeing the team images as all the same, because they dealt with one individual person for all their media inquiries:

I guess in my dealings through media, I look at them all the same, because I'm dealing with the same person. I'm talking about my media dealings with them. I would say that knowing that they are all owned by OSEG, I would look upon them as the same, but I don't think the average person would know that they are owned by the same company. My own vision is that I treat all the teams the same.

(M1)

Media responses reflected the same understanding as some of the other external interviews that dealt with the teams professionally on a corporate financial level. They also reflected that fans and other OSEG stakeholders might view the teams differently than they do at a more individual level.

Supporter club members and highly engaged fans also shared more nuanced and varied responses to the notion of connections among image perceptions of OSEG and its teams. Fan engagement was interpreted anecdotally through interviews with fans, supporter clubs, and social media leaders (those who post more than twice per week), rather than measured explicitly. Engagement was based on the number and depth of interactions between the interviewee and the organization, expressed knowledge of OSEG and its teams, and responses to the interview guide question, which asked if they considered themselves a fan of any of OSEG's three teams. Some highly engaged fans, such as SC1, saw the teams and the organization as interrelated:

I see them – like it's kind of hybrid, because I see the RedBlacks and 67's as more connected. So, I see those two more together, but I don't see the Fury as that different, I think – I think if something goes good or bad with the 67's or the RedBlacks, it does affect them [the Fury], I mean again, affects all changes. (SC1)

However, other highly engaged fans viewed them as separate:

I totally compartmentalize the three. Fury is changing leagues this year... because I'm such a casual soccer fan, that wouldn't change the way I look at the RedBlacks or the way I look at the 67's. And the RedBlacks and 67's are so freaking different, no comparisons. The 67's are a developmental league. You got young kids, some years you have an older team, some years you have a young team. It's different with the Fury; they're a pro-team. I just talk all about soccer. I watch it, and I enjoy it. I get more from their supporter group. My son likes them. They're super nice guys. If it wasn't for those guys, I wouldn't bother with the Fury games this year, soccer. Whatever, but the fact is we had so much fun hanging out with the supporter group that we're going to remain in this year. (SM2)

While this response reflected clear differences between the teams, there remained a sense of unity due to the connections built amongst the fans of the different teams, with many attending games of more than one OSEG property.

Less engaged fans, those who stated during their interview that they infrequently attended games and did not interact with the organization on a regular basis, saw the

teams as having more distinctions, but they were still aware that the teams were interconnected and might influence each other depending on how well one team did either financially or on the field. As one fan at a Fury game stated, “I see them as distinct. But I do follow the football a little bit too, and it's miles better than what was here before [the old franchise]” (Fury4). Another Fury fan stated, “They’re distinct, but there’s a little bit of bleeding of image. Again, professionalism in terms of the Fury — they seem to have a similar level of organization professionalism to the other teams” (Fury6).

This member of the team’s supporter club took a more cynical view of how economics played a role in the ways he viewed the different clubs’ interconnectedness:

So that’s what I think, that’s the main priority [game crowds], and probably it should be, because that’s probably their main revenue source. Yeah, I think that’s what they’re looking after first, and the RedBlacks are the main thing, and everything else is an add-on. Like I know, when they look at other properties, they’ve looked at Lacrosse, they’ve look at basketball, and they just want to fill that place [the stadium with event dates] if it is possible. (SC1)

This idea of a nuanced duality and of team distinction and interrelatedness through OSEG’s role as an umbrella entity for fans was perhaps best summed up by another supporter’s perspective:

And I just adore the RedBlacks, so I’m kind of focused on that funnel of OSEG I guess. I’m aware of what’s happened to the 67’s and Fury, but I don’t know the

games too much. I don't have a lot of spare time, and I don't go to TD Place. I mean aside from the Farmer's Market or to go to the RedBlacks games. I can separate them, and I got to keep them separate too. (SC2)

While fans have a sense of social identity with a particular team (Stodlt et al., 2012) that they may wish to keep separate from other OSEG teams, they still acknowledge that there is a connection and that they influence each other to some extent.

In general, when describing specific team images, fans noted that they felt the RedBlacks were the focus of OSEG activities, calling the RedBlacks "the bread and butter of the organization, I think of a tier one sport, the highest level of the organization" (RB9). Others noted, "The RedBlacks is the place you have to go, because it's the biggest party in town, a place to wander and meet people, a night out with your friends" (RB4).

Even though the Fury began at the same time as the RedBlacks, the team still seemed to still be establishing its image, likely due its smaller footprint in the public consciousness. As one person commented, the Fury is the "new kid on the block in Ottawa that's having growing pains establishing itself" (SM1). The image it had established was noted as "a unique experience with the cheers and songs of the supporter clubs that reminded me of Man City and Man U" (Fury1).

Finally, the 67's were perceived as "very kids-friendly and causal" (67s2) and lacking the "big city feel" (67s6). However, participants also noted that the team had lost some of its luster in recent years:

When Jeff Hunt took over the team, what a success story they were, they were a powerhouse. And now you go there on some nights, and there are less than 2,000 people, and you wonder, can they get the fans back that they had before they moved to the Senators arena for two years? Is Ottawa still a junior hockey city? (M3)

In summary, the external perspective did not distinguish team image distinction or connectedness as clearly as did the internal view. The internal perspective showed the teams as brand images that were distinct but overlapping. Fans and supporter clubs also shared this distinct but overlapping view, but not from a brand perspective. More engaged fans and club supporters were concentrated on the team image overlapping side of the spectrum than less engaged fans. They viewed the on-field teams as distinct, and they separated day-to-day on-field performance between OSEG teams. However, off-field elements, such as team administration and financial stability, were viewed as interconnected.

This perspective differed from that of those who had a professional relationship with the teams or OSEG. League partners, sponsors, government, and media primarily viewed OSEG from a corporate umbrella perspective. This appeared to be due to the context of their interactions with the teams, which was primarily done at a more senior, OSEG level that often encompassed multiple individual teams.

Common Team Images. As in the internal interviews, a number of themes were attributed to all the teams, indicating the characteristics of OSEG's identity that they authentically projected as image.

Organization is community-focused and communicative. Sub-themes similar to those seen in the internal interviews emerged from the external interview data, as participants provided responses reflecting an image focused on a customer and community orientation. However, responses did not seem to place the same emphasis on tradition-building or local ownership as did the internal responses. In fact, only two external stakeholders indirectly referred to tradition- or legacy-building. One referred to them when he discussed his past season ticket experience with the RedBlacks: “When I had season tickets, it [the team] was reliable about good service and stuff like that, so they feel reliable” (MG1). Another alluded to it in the form of consistency when speaking of legitimacy: “As funny as that sounds, that consistency is possibly giving me a stronger feeling toward them, a stronger and positive feeling, because they’ve shown that consistency” (RBSL1). The context of the case explained this finding. While the RedBlacks and Fury sought to create traditions, having only been in existence less than three years, traditions had not yet formed in the thoughts of their external stakeholders.

Regarding local ownership, only three references were made, although those that did so expressed the view that a stable, winning, and community-focused team was helped by having local ownership, as indicated:

I see the RedBlacks, that portion of OSEG that we most closely align with. I see the success that the team has on the field driven by the organizational top, right from picking a coach, picking a quality staff, drafting players that are going to reflect positively on the team and on the community. As such, how they interact with the local football community has been very strong and very positive... I

don't see it as a short term, "We got to win immediately and then market the firm, and then be dormant for years to come." With our close relationship with the OSEG side of things, we are sure that there is financial responsibility there, and that you have an ownership group that is local for all intents and purposes. It avoids the pitfalls of the Red Blacks, sorry of the Renegades, and to some degree the ending days of the Rough Riders. (CS2)

Regardless of the external respondent's personal perspective in dealing with OSEG or its teams, participants reiterated a belief that the organization wanted to play a direct role in the community. As one community sport stakeholder (CS1) noted, "I look at the big picture, and I think their intention has always been good, although I don't always agree with maybe a few things." One 67's fan reiterated this concept, believing the organization to be community-oriented and trustworthy because of how the organization interacted with the community:

Well, part of it would be subconscious stuff, like having seen them around a lot, knowing their logo, knowing that they are trustworthy. But part of it would be just their reputation of how they are in the community, how they sell their tickets, how they treat their fans, that type of thing. (67s1)

Another 67's fan expressed the organization's focus on the community as follows:

I think they are doing their best, putting their foot forward to try and make you know, this a business run financially and successful kind of thing, but as well they have a really good focus on the community, and a lot of us didn't even have that ability to come to these games, but they are and developing different packages and different ideas to, you know, to make it feasible for everyone to have fun.

(67s6)

The organization was perceived as being focused on the fans and their customers by making games and events accessible to everyone, regardless of the price or the person's team affiliation. Respondents also stated that the organization remained responsible for a positive boost in the Ottawa community — interestingly, for one participant, this positive image was essentially the only impression the participant had of OSEG:

Positive, and that they (OSEG) were able to bring the team along, from what I understand, they had a lot to do with bringing the team back, bringing the team back to Ottawa. So I think that's super positive, but yeah, I don't know loads about them, but you know everything I know seems really positive. I think there's more happening in Ottawa, and I feel a lot of it's due to them. (Fury5)

The value of such a comment is questionable, given the lack of awareness involved in expressing such a sentiment. On the other hand, that someone with even limited knowledge of OSEG should have such a positive perception seems to be a

triumph of image management. The focus on community included the potential effects of the stadium in the local community and raising the economic potential for the city:

I think the way that they went about it, dealing with some of the community pushback when the stadium was being built, was so admirable in terms of attending, you know, all of the committee meetings in the Glebe community, and then they stayed very plugged in, and they were very sensitive to the community concerns, and I think they did so many right things in terms of ensuring the local city councilors were on-board. I just think they are very savvy and very professional in how they conduct themselves. (SP1)

One of OSEG's government stakeholders echoed this sentiment:

I think OSEG found the proper balance between being a business and a good community citizen, and this can be seen by the people in the Glebe area. They thought it couldn't work, and now they have turned around and are saying, yeah, they have been able to find the sweet spot between making money and the commercial side of things but also found the right balance in taking community priorities into account. (G1)

Others noted OSEG's efforts to integrate through community sport groups, as noted by this response:

As I said, we connected early with the management team, and then when the team came together, they've had their coaching clinics, opportunities for kids, to see the players close. They've been very strong in the community, coming to coaching... They come to our camps and football camps. They've been very strong in the community, with local community players that they are actually playing on the RedBlacks team. (CS2)

Other respondents pointed to the organization treating their fans well and working to build collaborative efforts in the community:

They are a great organization, and it hasn't changed in my experience since I started here. I started here the same year that they joined the league, and from the moment that I started dealing with the organization, they're collaborative, they're creative, they're passionate, they're smart, and they mattered a lot to the league and have consistently been doing that since they've been in place. (RBLS2)

External stakeholders' interviews reflected a belief that the organization's identity aligned with the community and that they sensed shared values. The following response reflected those value understandings:

Pretty similar [values], I have less familiarity with the Fury's, even though I've been to a couple of games. I had season tickets for the RedBlacks one year. So I would say all of it has been similar in terms of being kid friendly. We've been to a

couple of Fury events where they practiced with some of our kids, so they are community focused. (67s2)

One community sport responder pointed out that the organization did not need to interact with them directly to achieve this:

We met before the RedBlacks came to be. They came and discussed our mutual objectives for growing football at the grassroots level and supporting the CFL franchise. We aligned very closely almost immediately. It was a discussion. It wasn't kind of a handout request from the football community, it was, "We want to work with you, we want to promote this sport, we both benefit from it, and we both want everyone around for a long time to come." From a club/team perspective, it is very strong relationship, and then also from an organization perspective, very strong. I think they show it (their interest in the community) in the relationship that we have with them. It's not a necessary requirement, to work with the minor associations like what hockey does. (CS2).

Fans noted experiencing a similar team customer and community focus when attending games of other OSEG teams, indicating these factors were part of a corporate identity linked to all three team images. Upon further review, such image perceptions transcended all the different external responses, regardless of the team in question. This demonstrates that many aspects of OSEG's internal organizational identity are reflected in external stakeholder responses regarding how they perceive image. Thus, internal

understandings of organizational identity and legitimacy appeared to overlap with the external images of organization, indicating no significant identity gaps.

Legitimacy. Responses from the external stakeholder interviews reflected similar views of the internal stakeholders regarding legitimacy in respect to OSEG. This finding was unsurprising due to the lack of identity gaps among the two stakeholder groups. Common themes included communication and responsiveness, the importance of credibility and consistency, establishing relationships with the community and stakeholders, and establishing trust. These were the most prevalent themes among both internal and external stakeholder' groups, as they presented in all 18 internal interviews, as well as 25 of the 36 external interviews.

Communication and responsiveness. Fans expressed an understanding that legitimacy came from the communication and responsiveness of the organization:

If it's a legitimate team to me, they got the whole package together from on-ice to off-ice. And then communication, both online or in person, like, that's big for me too. I want to see a team that was responsive and engages with the community, so all that, when you combine together, just adds different levels of legitimacy to the team. (67s5)

Responses from external stakeholders pointed out that the organization improved communication efforts in recent years. As noted by a media representative (journalist), the organization's initial communication patterns were inconsistent:

I think it was a little scattered initially — what it was all about and how it was going to form — and I think they are getting a more consistent message finally coming out now, and a pretty good example, this is a young organization, this year, number three I think, and we had a separate soccer team before, we had a separate hockey team, and a brand new football team, and now they have all been merged together, and I have noticed a little bit of inconsistency sometimes, trying to merge the messages, who is delivering the messages sometimes, because you have the same PR people, media relations people, popping out the same message. They have concerts as well, too, that are part of it. (M2)

Despite these difficulties, such a response indicated the company learned from mistakes and responded to feedback. Others, including the respondent below, pointed out that the organization communicated using a variety of information channels:

Well, I just follow them, what comes out in the news. And I follow them online, they do a pretty good job of putting videos up, whether it be interviews or game footage, putting stuff on the website, which I'm on frequently. So I think they're doing a good job. (CS1)

Other responses, including the one from an OSEG sponsor below, pointed to OSEG's responsiveness to customer feedback:

Even the suite level, I mean something new and innovative they did, like having an all-inclusive ticket (for food and drinks), the feedback on that has been outstanding. So I think they are listening a lot, because of what we hear from our customers. Our customers are the ones going to games, right? (SP2)

Further responses pointed out that communication and responsiveness from the organization extended to interpersonal communication:

But even how like the representative reaches out to us and stuff like that. Like he actually came and met us in the stands one time, he calls occasionally and stuff like that. Like there's a lot of... Yeah, like we are season ticket holders, and we get that personal touch from the organization. (Fury2)

The consensus was that the organization communicated well and responded using different forms of communication. These actions were important pieces of the external understanding of organizational legitimacy. It also connected to the credibility and consistency inherent in the organization.

Credibility and consistency. Respondents also reflected the internal belief that credibility and consistency in image perceptions were important dimensions of legitimacy. Responses from external stakeholders reflected the belief that the organization displays consistency:

I think it's been consistent, but that is a change in itself, because they've shown consistency, now speaking on the RedBlacks. We really don't have any history

there to relate it to, so that first image and that first perception that you do have, if it doesn't change, but it does in a sense, because they have shown consistency over the first three years. As funny as that sounds, that consistency is changing in possibly giving me a stronger feeling toward them. A stronger and positive feeling, because they've shown that consistency. (RLBS1)

This response demonstrated the importance of consistency of image with fans since the beginning of the franchise. Maintaining a consistent image established credibility from the responder's perspective. Even less supportive responses pointed to how consistent and effective the organization was at maintaining a good perception:

I think OSEG — I think they're pretty damn confident. I would say, at this point they're good. I think they're doing a good job, but I think they would be the first person to tell you that too. They don't hide that; it starts rubbing people the wrong way. It hasn't so far... How long has this redevelopment (Lansdowne) been open, four years or something? I'll see what happens in 10 years or something. (SC2)

OSEG capitalized on this initial behaviour and built a consistent approach to develop credibility with external stakeholders and the community. The effectiveness of OSEG's approach was reflected in this participants' response:

For me, it's very positive, 'cause I can see the bigger picture in what they're trying to do. I'm not sure what it's like for other people, but I see beyond the wins and the losses, and this year has been a struggle, and they basically had to overhaul

their team (Fury) twice. So it's really hard to have high expectations for them, even though the casual fan might. But from what I see, they're trying. They're doing the best they can, or anyone could, to make it work. And I think it will pay off. I think, you know, it paid off early (getting to the league finals the year before), and maybe that was just a bit of a stroke of luck. But I think long term, if they keep getting support and they keep, I don't think the Fury is... they are probably losing money right now, not making much, but I'm hoping that if they hang tight, that will turn around in many years to come. (CS1)

Participants understood the organization's plan to build longevity and credibility with the teams. Sponsors held similar beliefs about the organization's consistency and credibility:

So that they never put us in a position that would really put our brand in any particular risk at all. They are innovative, they are forward thinking. I have all kinds of positive accolades, like things that work out. It's just a pleasure to work with them in terms of a sponsorship relationship. (SP1)

Media responses reflected the belief that the organization was professional and stable, supporting OSEG's internal identity:

Well, from what I read and what I've dealt with, they seem to be a quite professional organization that seems to be highly respected, at least among myself

and my peers in the media here. Everybody seems to be on consensus that they are a fine organization. (M1)

OSEG's established consistency and credibility from the perspective of the external stakeholders pointed to verification of the internal perspective of organizational legitimacy, matching those held by their external stakeholders.

Relationship and connection to community and stakeholders. The organization's development of consistency and credibility, as well as their ability to adapt to meet those outcomes, was required to build strong connections to the community and its stakeholders, thereby enhancing OSEG's perceived legitimacy:

My perception is that it is a young, evolving organization. I mean, they're certainly in their current embodiment of the stewards of Lansdowne, and sports teams and the commercial ventures there, you know, they are only a couple of years in. So they are very much evolving, they very much came in with an approach that they've had to massage, as they've entered the various markets that they've entered, to address the realities of community expectations and partnership expectations, with those that they've partnered with, that kind of thing. So to me, they have gone, in one sense, from a primarily a kind of sports and business focused organization to one that has had to work on softening up [increasing] their community involvement, their goodwill, community presence, and there's been a couple of missteps and good fixes, and it's a work in progress,

and we felt that same way as the on-site partner with them, every step of the way.
(MG1)

From the external perspective, the organization has built a strong image based on their community and stakeholder focus. This focus was similar to the internal understanding of OSEG's identity.

Trust-building. Developing relationships with the community and important stakeholders was a necessary step from both the internal and external perspective in the co-creation of image meaning in legitimacy. It allowed for the direct transparent communication of identity by the organization (Scott & Lane, 2000; Parent & Foreman, 2007), mitigating the often-altered interpretations of OSEG's refracted images. As noted earlier on page 55, refracted images are images of the organization not projected by the organization itself (Rindova, 1999) and are illustrated by the following comment:

There's a perception outside of the city, I've noticed, that the team is young and cocky, since we are still new to the CFL. Because we are cool right now and have new people flocking to the game. I think that is what it boils down to. (RB5)

From an external perspective, the direct communication of image through community relationships allowed stakeholders to make social judgments based on the true and authentic identity of OSEG, despite the existence of refracted images:

I think their campaigns have been “on point” if you want to call it that. They've been on message with what they want out there, so what others say about them hasn't really influenced me. If anything, I give them more credit, and how they're using social media to speak to fans, because I know in our business we're doing the same. (SP2)

Over time, this consistent image of OSEG developed trust. The external responses reflected the necessity of building and/or continuing to build trust as part of being seen as legitimate. From the media responses, the organization appeared to have built the necessary trust, with one participant stating, “Yeah, I would think that they’ve got their act together, and they seem to have their heads in the right place in the business model. From an outsider, it seems to be sound” (M1). This statement was reiterated by the following Twitter user, who pointed out an interesting situation regarding trust with OSEG:

Generally, yes (trust). The Fury is moving to a different league, and I straight up asked one of the Fury reps twice if the rumors were true, and he denied it to my face twice and said absolutely they weren't true, and they totally were true. He a hundred percent looked me right in the eye and said no, there is no basis for it, and it was totally true the whole time. They lied to my face. But as a general rule, yeah, I find them trustworthy. (SM2)

The representative in question was not allowed to discuss the move in public. However, the organization had developed such a high level of trust that the user, while annoyed, understood the behaviour. While OSEG has built trust, some responses indicated potential threats to that trust:

Actually, they're ethical, I think they have good people in the organization, but I just don't think they have enough people to do what they're trying to do. I think there's too much doubling up, having football people talk to the soccer fans about what a soccer atmosphere needs to be. (SC1)

Not having the requisite amount of staff to meet goals appeared to erode confidence in the organization's capabilities. This issue reflected the balance required in promoting the synergies among the teams when it created positive connotations, such as stability and professionalism. It is necessary to demonstrate team distinction to reflect the importance of individual stakeholders' needs and nurture their individual team affiliations.

PR and IM. Similar to internal stakeholders, there was a lack of consensus of the PR role within IM. Some viewed PR as broadly responsible for IM and the overall perceptions of the sport organization and its teams:

I think public relations as an entity for me means how their role would be.

Ultimately, they're responsible for the perception of an organization, its teams,

building a community, or an integrated relationship with the community. That's the way I see public relations; it is top-line for me.

Such a view is also reflected in CG1's comments when he noted, "Public relations is kind of like the face of your corporation or organization. So it's kind of like how you put the message across of what you're about."

Others saw PR as supporting image, particularly brand image and dealing with public issues.

In general, public relations I feel is like making people like you. You know, mitigating issues. It's about growing your brand in a positive manner, and in a lot of ways, public relations is sorting out screw ups, and that it can also be used for promoting brand loyalty and community loyalty and that kind of stuff. (SG1)

In short, stakeholder interviews revealed no clear understanding of the role of PR within IM of a sport organization.

Study One Summary

Interviews from both internal and external stakeholders revealed that team distinctiveness and interrelatedness were context-dependent. While internal stakeholders described each team as unique, further questioning revealed that each team principally shared common attributes that formed the foundation of each team's symbolic representation (image) created by OSEG. These common attributes were also identified in OSEG's internal documents. These findings indicated the presence of a strong,

overarching organizational identity or self-image held by employees of OSEG, which could be used to explain both team and organizational actions. These authentic outward expressions of image by OSEG and its teams included an external focus on customers, stakeholders, and the Ottawa community. This focus was seen as a company-wide, collective responsibility. This external emphasis could be seen in the organization's concerted efforts to build relationships and traditions with its external environment.

As Figure 4.1 illustrated, external stakeholders accepted these image attributes as similar themes of being communicative, customer-oriented, and community-oriented emerged when they discussed how they perceived OSEG and its teams. This indicated that OSEG had successfully negotiated the meanings of its identity and image with its external stakeholders. Thus, no identity gap or impetus for image change existed during the course of the research.

Interviews revealed mutual understandings of legitimacy between internal and external stakeholders. Internal stakeholders revealed that OSEG's organizational legitimacy consisted of developing relationships with the community in which they operated. This was operationalized through being communicative, transparent, and building trust with their stakeholders over time, often expressed as being credible.

External stakeholders expressed similar concepts when discussing what legitimacy meant to them, also using the terms communication, consistency, credibility, trust, and community. This indicated that OSEG was successful in its efforts to meet societal norms and that a mutual understanding of legitimacy existed between OSEG and its stakeholders. This also indicated that the research was conducted during a time of what Boyd (2000) referred to as actional legitimacy. These are times in which the

organization seeks legitimacy for actions either before or as they happen. This state of organizational stability is significantly more common than times of crisis or times of organizational instability and change, or what Boyd (2000) labeled as periods of institutional legitimacy, in which an organization's very existence is threatened.

Both image and legitimacy understandings by internal and external stakeholders were summarized in Figure 4.1 and therefore addressed the first research question, which sought to understand the interaction of identity, image, and legitimacy in a social media world. As Figure 4.1 indicated, not only are there mutual understandings between internal and external stakeholders in regard to image and legitimacy but also between the attributes of the two concepts themselves, specifically around the notions of communication, trust, and community. Thus, if legitimacy and legitimation are the core of the PR discipline (Waeraas, 2009), from a PR perspective, the seeking of legitimacy can be said to manifest itself in part through actions that create organizational images, and the co-creation of image between internal and external stakeholders is the process of legitimacy-seeking by the organization and legitimacy-granting by external stakeholders. This supported Bitekine's (2011) conceptualization of the existence of legitimacy dimensions, as well as the notion that perceptions of organizational images by stakeholders are scrutinized in the form of social judgments made regarding the organization as part of the co-creational image process.

This suggests that OSEG's legitimacy-seeking behaviour is in fact the underlying driver of IM, and it can be posited that in a co-creational approach to IM, the impetuous to change identity is not through identity gaps, the discrepancy between the perception of current and desired identity of an organization — indicated by Reger and her colleagues

(1994), and Gioia and his colleagues (2014) — but rather through the outward-facing legitimacy-seeking process that emerges through the negotiation of organizational image with external stakeholders. This supposition, supported by the findings, helped answer the second research question in uncovering how the understanding of legitimacy by internal and external stakeholders interacts in the co-creation of image for a sport organization in a social media world.

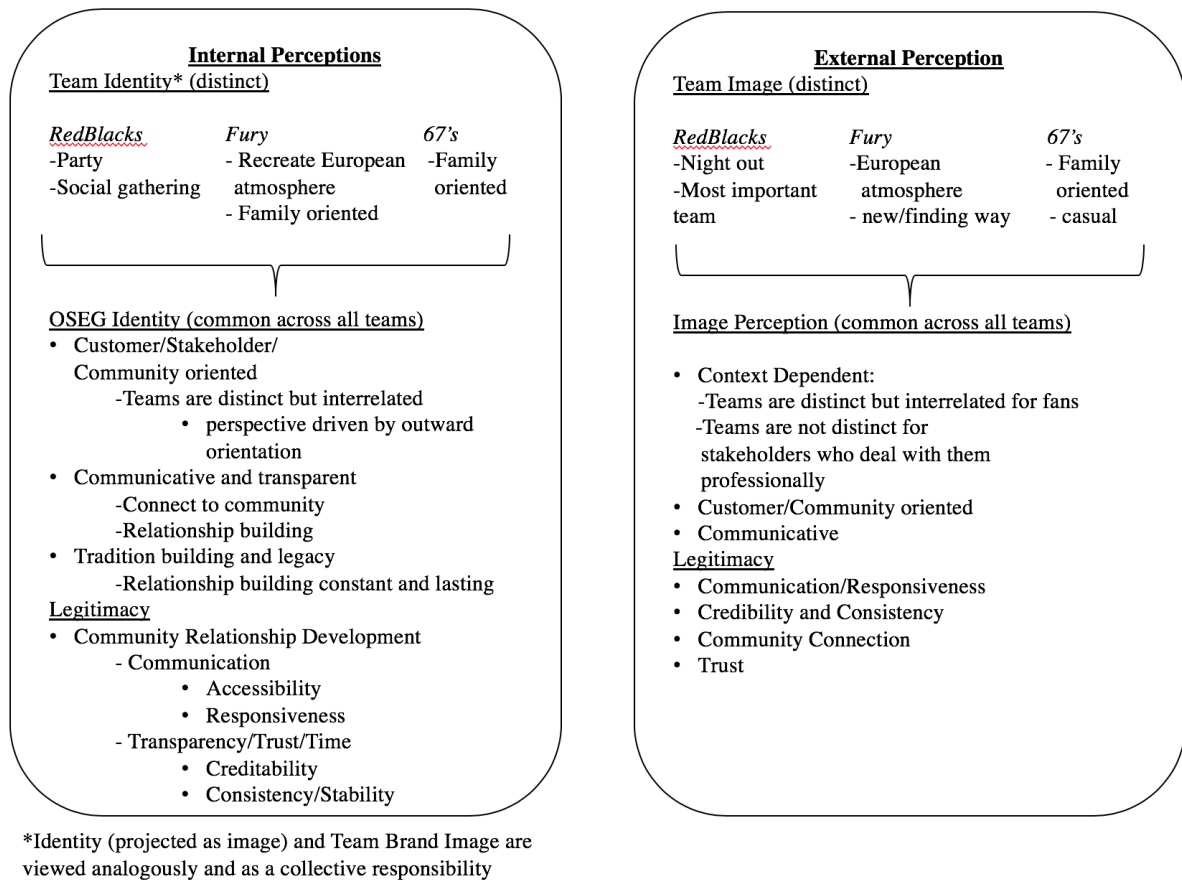


Figure 4.1. OSEG's internal and external stakeholder understandings of identity, image, and legitimacy.

Finally, it should be noted that there was confusion among internal and external understandings of IM and its relationship with PR. Some saw IM as the holistic face of the organization, touching all stakeholders, while others saw it as part of brand marketing. PR's responsibility for IM was also opaque, with some viewing PR as responsible for IM and others viewing PR as an enacting tool of IM, communicating rather than shaping an organization's image. When speaking of PR, however, there was consensus that it involved interaction with stakeholders.

Study Two Findings

The second phase of the research complemented study one. After the concepts of identity and image were explored through the macro or society-level concept of legitimacy, this concept was then used to study organizational stakeholder interactions at the individual or micro-level through Twitter. This study allowed the researcher to seek ways in which perceptions of legitimacy through image, uncovered in the first study, were expressed, accepted, and evaluated in an online environment. This addressed research questions three and four: how does the usage of social media explicitly affect the creation of organizational identity, organizational image, and organizational legitimacy in a sports organization; and how does social media usage directly affect the co-creation of organizational image for a sport organization?

Gilpin (2010) noted that an organization's use of online communication channels constructs images through the central terms in their textual communication. This presentation of texts, when viewed cumulatively, provided an opportunity to examine ways in which an organization chose to express identity through the themes that predominated these expressions. From a social theory perspective of PR, communicating

such outward displays of identity on Twitter could be considered legitimacy-seeking actions (Johnson et al., 2006; Laïfi & Josserand, 2016; Moffitt, 1994), a consideration supported by the first study, and be thematically labeled as perceived legitimacy dimensions (Bitektine, 2011; Lock et al., 2015; Moffitt, 1994). Legitimacy dimensions, as explained on pages 61 and 63, are the perceptions of organizational images by stakeholders that are scrutinized in the form of social judgments made regarding the organization. Thus, data analysis and interpretation were completed through the collection and analysis of OSEG's emergent outward expressions of identity (image) and the corresponding legitimacy dimensions of tweets scrutinized by the online community.

Image Communication Themes

The examination of OSEG's eight Twitter accounts for legitimacy-seeking activities was grounded on the interrelation of organizational identity, image, and legitimacy found in the first study. The results of the analysis revealed 30 non-exclusive image themes over the eight Twitter accounts, which were then reduced to 10 after determining the overlying structures of the codes and consolidating them (Krippendorff, 2012, Appendix Q). This was done after discussions with the research supervisors resulting in the following codes: (a) affiliation, (b) competence/success, (c) community engagement, (d) direct engagement, (e) game/event experience, (f) gratitude/fan recognition, (g) humanizing the organization, (h) informational, (i) social validation, and (j) promoting/information sharing. Meanings of each column code of Appendix Q are explained on page 228, when Table 4.13 is introduced.

The perceived legitimacy-seeking dimensions that emerged from the qualitative data were examined and then placed within legitimacy typologies following Lock et al.'s

(2015) CPOL framework. Specifically, each legitimacy-seeking dimension (discussed as image communication themes hereon) was examined in terms of the type of legitimacy sought, its evaluative process and the benefits diffused (i.e., cognitive, sociopolitical [Appendix E]), legitimacy type (i.e, personal, linkage [Appendix F]), and the values that underpinned organizational legitimacy perceptions as expressed through image. The term image communication theme was selected as a more descriptive term when discussing legitimacy dimensions within study findings and discussion, as it reminds readers that legitimacy dimensions are images scrutinized by stakeholders in the form of social judgments, and in this study, those images emerged as themes of the content analysis performed on Twitter.

The theme evaluations from OSEG's social media usage are discussed in greater detail below. They stemmed from the organization's dual role of a privately held Tier 2 sport organization and a public steward of the City of Ottawa, operating the city-owned TD Place Stadium — Lansdowne Live — and the surrounding parkland.

Affiliation. In outward projections of identity, many OSEG tweets sought to affiliate with desirable others, an action in which stakeholders would make a sociopolitical evaluation of the message to determine if the affiliation resonated (see Table 4.1). This theme was the amalgamation of five codes (government, league/teams within league/higher leagues or national teams, other organizations or events, other sport athletes or celebrities, and media). Affiliation tweets served much the same purpose as sponsorship, i.e., acting to capitalize on image association/transfers with desired others.

Table 4.1

Affiliation Twitter Image Communication Theme

Image Communication Theme	Dimension Description	Example	Legitimacy Type	Benefit Diffusion
Affiliation	When the organization seeks to show affiliation with another organization or group.	<i>@Ottawa 67sHockey:</i> Todays playoff flag raising @ City Hall w/Major J-Watz & da boyz #TogetherWeRise <i>@JimWatsonOttawa</i> https://t.co/QSBK92vQ 6x (March 23, 2016) <i>@Ottawa67sHockey:</i> Congrats to former #67s forward <i>@Logancouture</i> on making the #StanleyCupFinal with his <i>@SanJoseSharks</i> https://t.co/h5ZHDIOV1 b (May26, 2016)	Linkage	Pragmatic/ Moral

Examples of tweets that associated OSEG teams with the leagues they were in or teams against which they competed included league news (e.g., *@OttawaFuryFC*: RT *@naslofficial*: The #NASL Game of the Week on *@ONEWorldSports*, schedule for the 2016 Spring Season is here), acknowledging other teams (e.g., *@REDBLACKS*: A hard-fought battle against a tough opponent. Good game, *@calstampeders*. #CFLGameDay #RNation), and league messages (e.g., RT *@REDBLACKS*: An open letter to *@CFL* fans from Jeffrey L. Orridge after his first day on the job). Illustrations of messages with image associations to higher leagues included tweeting about former 67's players' NHL

accomplishments (e.g., *@Ottawa67sHockey*: Congrats to former #67s forward *@Logancouture* on making the #StanleyCupFinal with his *@SanJoseSharks*) and congratulating teams in those higher leagues (e.g., *@OttawaFuryFC*: Congrats to our Canadian Cuzins the *@impactmontreal* 1st Canadian Team to represent at the *@CONCACAF* Finals!).

Tweets of associations with National Team Programs included players being called up to National Teams (e.g., *@OttawaFuryFC*: Julian De Guzman and Marcel De Jong have been called to the #canMNT. READ  #FeelTheFury) and Canadian Women's National Team matches held at TD Place (e.g., *@OttawaFuryFC*: Girls talking about how excited they are for the FIFA Women's World Cup on *@CTVOttMornLive*).

Tweets that involved affiliation with other organizations also sought image transfers and involved retweeting or showing support of charity organizations, such as Do it for Daron (which encourages young people to talk openly about mental illness; e.g., *@REDBLACKS*: No plans for Sunday #Ottawa? Help us build 3000 snowpeople *@TD_Place* to support #DIFD). In addition, these types of tweets centered on local community festivals or events, such as Ottawa Buskerfest (e.g., *@Ottawa67sHockey*: RT *@kidsfests*: Firetruck is just arriving *@kidsfests* on *@SparksStreet* come join the fun between lyon& kent #ottawa *@OttawaBuskrfest*) or community organizations (e.g., *@OttawaFuryFC*: RT *@TheOttawaRoyals*: Lineup for autographs from *@OttawaFuryFC* players & *@SparkyFURY* at the Nepean City/Royals community practice!).

Affiliations with celebrities or athletes have been linked to positive evaluations of a product or organization (Clemente, Dolansky, Mantonakis, & White 2014). Through

such communications, OSEG attempted to burnish the image of itself and its teams.

These efforts included extending congratulations to local wrestler Erica Wiebe on her

gold medal at the 2016 Rio Olympics (@REDBLACKS: Congrats to Stittsville native

@ericawiebe on winning #gold in women's #Olympics #wrestling! #TeamCanada

#Rio2016), tweeting photos and messages of NHL player Claude Giroux at a RedBlacks

game (@REDBLACKS: RT @28CGiroux: Good time at the @REDBLACKS home

opener last night. @ TD Place Stadium), sending pictures of folk band Mumford and

Sons in a Fury jersey (@OttawaFuryFC: Newest members of the #FuryFaithful. Thanks

for the support, @MumfordAndSons! #FeelTheFury), or a UFC fighter participating in a

Fury practice prior to the event at TD Place (@OttawaFuryFC: UFC fighter

@EliasTheodorou puts his footy skills to the test with the #FuryFC at @TD_Place).

Media affiliation tweets included images of media interviewing players (e.g., @

OttawaFuryFC: Another pre-game interview from @pauldalglish with @TerryMarcotte.

#FuryFC) or providing links to favourable stories (e.g., @Ottawa67sHockey: RT

@TSN1200: @Ottawa67sHockey HC and GM Jeff Brown on the coming season and

excitement surrounding Sasha Chmelevski).

Government-affiliated tweets had a two-fold purpose. The first was to promote and acknowledge city councilors individually for any activities performed in association with OSEG or its teams, such as attending a press conference to announce new facility

sponsors (e.g., @OSEG_Corporate:RT @JimWatsonOttawa: I was pleased to welcome

@TD Canada reps as we marked their partnership w/ @OSEG_Corporate for #TDPlace

at #Lansdowne). The second was to show government support of the organization or

team (e.g., *@Ottawa67sHockey*: Ready to kick off the #OHLPlayoffs after today's flag raising at City Hall. Game 1 is tomorrow night in St. Kitts!).

Affiliation image-themed tweets were attempts by the organization to seek legitimacy through linkages with other legitimate social actors or judgment-validation institutions (Bitektine & Haack, 2015) to normalize actions and events. This legitimacy type was both pragmatic and moral in nature, emphasizing that multiple legitimacy diffusion benefits may relate to a specific evaluation by the public. The diffusion of moral legitimacy benefits was observed through linkages to institutions, such as the media, government, and charitable organizations or events which are associated with social and cultural norms. Pragmatic legitimacy benefits, those that created legitimacy for certain constituency groups, were affiliations between OSEG and other celebrities, athletes, or leagues. These images only appealed to followers who were already socially identified with the celebrity, athlete, or league.

Competence/success. Twitter communications of competence or success also required sociopolitical evaluations, as organizational competence or success assessments were not granted simply by organizational existence (see Table 4.2). This image theme was comprised of two codes: on-field and off-field. It included outside (non-fan) acknowledgment or awards received by OSEG, its teams, staff, or owners. As such, this aspect showed ways in which specific evaluations might encompass multiple legitimacy types (Bitektine, 2011). For example, in off-field coding, personal legitimacy (the evaluations of an organizational leader's charisma and competence relative to social and cultural expectations) was demonstrated through this tweet: “*@OSEG_Corporate*: RT *@OSEGMarkGoudie*: Sincere congrats to OSEG partner Roger Greenberg who becomes

a Member of the Order of Canada today. We are proud!” while managerial legitimacy (evaluations of effectiveness and efficiency of OSEG in relation to normative expectations) and technical legitimacy (legitimacy denoting technology and staff qualifications meeting expected standards) were illustrated through this tweet:

“@OSEG_Corporate: RT @OSEGAdrian: #OSEG and @ottawacity in partnership receive the Outstanding Tourism Achievement award at the #OTawards for redevelopment of Lansdowne Live.” On-field examples of these three legitimacy types included tweets about coaching awards (e.g., @OttawaFuryFC: RT @CFRAOttawa: Marc Dos Santos named NASL Coach of the Year for time with Ottawa Fury FC) and individual team or player recognitions (e.g., @REDBLACKS: After a near-perfect outing, @Trev_Harris has been named as one of the @CFL top players of the week! #RNation).

Table 4.2

Competence/Success Twitter Image Communication Theme

Image Communication Theme	Dimension Description	Example	Legitimacy Type	Benefit Diffusion
Competence / Success	When the organization or team seeks to show how well-managed and excellent they are	@OSEG RT: @REDBLACKS: VIDEO: @OSEG_Corporate Chairman Roger Greenberg comments on receiving the @CFL Commissioner's award [http://t.co/sIt2P2dD5p] (December 3, 2014)	Personal/ Managerial	Moral
		@OttawaFuryFC: @Ottos_BMW presents @rafael_alves33 & @falvey32 aka "#Falves" with the Newcomer of the Year Award. #WeAreFury https://t.co/NiolcNTC60 (November 17, 2015)	Technical	Pragmatic

Community engagement. Engagement in communities by an organization has been linked to an enhanced corporate image (see Table 4.3; Fombrun & Shanley, 1990; Quazi & O'Brien, 2000). As OSEG's identity tenets included community-orientation and relationship-building, the use of this theme in social media assisted in the building of social capital through the creation of social interaction ties, helping build a shared vision and trust among the teams and their community stakeholders (Sun & Shang, 2014). The majority of these tweets centred on communicating CSR (see page 39 for definition). As previously mentioned, CSR implies that businesses are responsible for assessing and managing their wider impact on society (Lockett, Moon, & Visser, 2006) and were

enacted in part to handle public policy and social issues, leading to positive sociopolitical legitimacy evaluations (Windsor, 2006). This is illustrated in OSEG through the following tweet: “@BigJoeGrandJos: What a great evening with the gang at @NepeanEagles and my buds Andrew Marshall & Connor Williams of your @REDBLACKS.” It also included annotating executions of their own community-focused programs, such as OSEG’s GOALS and Champions for Education, where athletes and mascots visited schools and youth groups to provide fun, engaging, and educational opportunities for youth (e.g., @67sRiley: So stoked for our 1st Champs for Education of 2015 tomorrow at DA Moodie School w/@Ottawa67sHockey @trentmallette & @mvlajkov11).

Table 4.3

Community Engagement Twitter Image Communication Theme

Image Communication Theme	Dimension Description	Example	Legitimacy Type	Benefit Diffusion
Community Engagement	Demonstrations of community concern, willingness/actions to integrate into community, CSR	<i>@OttawaFuryFC</i>: In the 85th minute section W joined the soccer world by showing its support to the thousands of Syrian refugees. (July 27, 2016) <i>@BigJoeGrandJos</i>: What a great evening with the gang at <i>@NepeanEagles</i> and my buds Andrew Marshall & Connor Williams of your <i>@REDBLACKS</i> http://t.co/6Au90zU1ou. (October 18, 2016)	Consequential Linkage	Moral/ Pragmatic

Demonstrations of community concerns and social causes were also included in this image theme. Such activities and expressions of identity allowed sport organizations to address pressures from key community stakeholders, indicating that the diffusion of benefits in this image theme concerned constituent self-interest (i.e., pragmatic legitimacy). In addition, this image theme sought to gain legitimacy within the community at large, indicating that OSEG engaged in consequential legitimacy-seeking actions, which diffuse benefits to stakeholders and society. In this context, OSEG's

community relations activities diffused moral legitimacy benefits to the community it serves by having been perceived as “doing the right thing” (Lock et al., 2015, p. 20).

Direct engagement. Direct engagement coded tweets sought to specifically engage followers or promote conversations with a team, player, mascot, employee, or TD Place event (see Table 4.4). It consisted of four sub-codes. The first consisted of OSEG retweets of athlete engagement activities (e.g., @REDBLACKS: RT @brettsmithqb: So proud to be with the @REDBLACKS. There is no other team I would rather be with than them. I'm excited for the future let me know how you feel!). It also included instances when players or coaches “took over” the team’s Twitter account to answer fan questions (e.g., @OttawaFuryFC: JUST IN: Head coach @pauldalglish will be holding a LIVE Q&A on Twitter on Wednesday at noon, and @REDBLACKS: O-lineman Jon Gott is here now to answer all of your questions! Don't forget to use #AskABud).

Table 4.4

Direct Engagement Image Communication Theme

Image Communication Theme	Dimension Description	Example	Legitimacy Type	Benefit Diffusion
Direct Engagement	Tweets that seek to engage followers or promote conversations with a team, player, mascot, employee, or TD performer	<i>@OttawaFuryFC</i>: It's #MatchDay! Where are you watching the game tonight? https://t.co/v3SRZIIMl J (August 13, 2016) <i>@67sRiley</i>: I'm going for a skate on the canal. Who's gonna join me 12-1pm? I got prizes for some lucky fans. Tweet me for my location.<i>@Ottawa67s</i> Hockey (January 10, 2015)	Linkage	Pragmatic

It also included organizational attempts to engage fans in conversation (e.g., *@OttawaFuryFC*: We're ready for the game. Are you? #feelthefury), trash talking/humour (e.g., *@Ottawa67sHockey*: *@OHLIceDogs* Playoff tradition implemented by *@ZenonKonopka* - one eye black for each round we play), or polls and contests (e.g., *@OttawaFuryFC*: VOTE NOW! Peiser is up for *@naslofficial's* Play of the Week).

The second open code featured a unique aspect of being a conglomerate sport organization, providing a forum for fans to engage in conversation through inter-mascot banter (e.g., *@67sRiley*: Is that Big Joe's son in net for Barrie? 6'6" 238 lbs hailing from

parts unknown. #Giant @Ottawa67sHockey @BigJoeGrandJos). The third code contained retweets of engagement messages of performers/managers of TD Place concerts (e.g., @TD_Place: RT @LiveNationON: .@acdc rocked TD Place Stadium last night! We want to know your favourite part of the show!), while the final open code included OSEG's retweets of staff messages (e.g., @67sRiley: RT @sluuby: Who's got 67's Fever? These girls! #TogetherWeRise @Ottawa67sHockey Huge Playoff Game #4 tonight @TD_Place).

Through these tweets, OSEG pursued linkage legitimacy through attempts to engage with stakeholders. If those stakeholders accepted the communicated message, it tacitly validated or normalized the message communicated for others, as perceived social groups on Twitter were sources of legitimacy (Etter et al., 2017). As OSEG was specifically targeting engaged fans and Twitter followers, strategic motivation appeared to be involved, where OSEG provided highly engaged fans an opportunity to express their personal fanship and create a sense of parasocial closeness (pragmatic legitimacy).

Game or event experience. These were tweets or retweets by the organization that communicated positive game, event, or Lansdowne Live experiences (see Table 4.5). These included two child codes: fan game or event experiences communicated by the organization and family activity-focused tweets. The first was exemplified by such tweets as “@REDBLACKS: #RNation is @CFL's ‘newest wall of noise’ that ‘BURSTS through your TV screen!’” and “@TD_Place: ‘Local country/rock band @RiverTownSaints is performing LIVE right now at the @REDBLACKS tailgate! Swing by Gate 6, @Ottawa67sHockey.’”

Table 4.5

Game or Event Experience Twitter Communication Theme

Image Communication Theme	Dimension Description	Example	Legitimacy Type	Benefit Diffusion
Game or Event Experience	Tweets or retweets by the organization concerning positive game or event experiences	<i>@Ottawa67sHockey</i> : RT <i>@hugegolfhacker</i> : <i>@Ottawa67sHockey</i> my son and I are having a great time watching this guy #67sSayThanks (March 16, 2016)	Consequential/ Linkage	Moral
		<i>@Ottawa67sHockey</i> : RT <i>@CrackTheCapital</i> : Come find us today at the <i>@Ottawa67sHockey</i> game for some fun and giveaways! (February 3, 2015)	Technical	Pragmatic

The later sub-theme could be seen in Ottawa 67's retweet, "RT *@KrisMerrells*: *@67sRiley @Ottawa67sHockey* 'Great time at my first 67's game - even got a visit from some local wildlife!" and "*@OttawaFuryFC*: 'The Kids Zone is bumpin'! It's all thanks to you, #FuryFanatics!" This legitimacy dimension reflected the importance of fan experience and TD Place/Lansdowne Live as a community-gathering place to OSEG.

Community-building was a consequential legitimacy-seeking action that diffused moral benefits to Ottawa's constituents. In these tweets, OSEG demonstrated that the stadium services, technology, personnel, athletes, and coaches have exceeded or met

normative expectations or standards. This finding indicated that technical legitimacy was also present, as OSEG communicated effective organizational performance as related to game experiences. There was also an element of linkage legitimacy in these tweets, as those attending events or games would be viewed as legitimate social actors within the fan community.

Gratitude/fan recognition. This theme consisted of only one code. It comprised of OSEG thanking, recognizing, or acknowledging its fans at games or events (see Table 4.6). Some tweets acknowledged fan support at games (e.g., *@OttawaFuryFC*: Even on enemy soil, our supporters are an intimidating force. #whoareya #wearefury #furyfc *@NewYorkCosmos*; *@TD_Place*: Record set *@TD_Place* tonight ... the largest crowd to attend a National Team match in Ottawa history 23,568 - great work Ottawa! #CanadaRED). Others acknowledged specific fans (e.g., *@REDBLACKS*: To our Season Ticket Holder of the Match Gregory Smith. Thanks for your support!).

Table 4.6

Gratitude/Fan Recognition Twitter Image Communication Theme

Image Communication Theme	Dimension Description	Example	Legitimacy Type	Benefit Diffusion
Gratitude/Fan Recognition	Organization thanks or acknowledges fans or Twitter followers	<i>@REDBLACKS</i>: Merry Christmas & Happy Holidays to all our fans! https://t.co/zxhUjaggyc https://t.co/CAMVVOT7z2 (December 24, 2015) <i>@OttawaFuryFC</i>: RT <i>@pauldalGLISH</i>: Historical victory for all involved with <i>@OttawaFuryFC</i> last night. Thank you to all who attended and created such a special atmosphere (August 4, 2016)	Linkage	Pragmatic

This code also included tweets where OSEG thanked, recognized, or acknowledged fans or other stakeholders outside of their event attendance. Thus, it included team activities or events outside of TD Place (e.g., *@REDBLACKS*: You out did yourselves #Rnation tonights #QBclub *@the_prescott* was the best ever! Thank you *@CFLCommunity* *@REDBLACKS*, *@BigJoeGrandJos*) or more general acknowledgement (e.g., *@67sRiley*: Every Raccoon will tell you that it is always good to have a friend in city Traffic Management. Thanks for the follow *@hassan_madhoun*).

As in the game/event experience and engagement themes, this legitimacy dimension typology could be classified as linkage, as OSEG was again specifically targeting engaged fans seeking pragmatic legitimacy diffusion benefits by being perceived as a legitimate social actor within the fan community. Tweets of appreciation provided a tangible connection between OSEG and its fans and helped build relationships.

Humanizing the organization. This image theme communicated behind-the-scenes messages or organizational retweets of messages from the personal accounts of OSEG staff, team management, athletes, and TD Place performers (see Table 4.7). It drew together five sub-codes, the first being insider. Insider tweets included taking followers behind the scenes of team management (e.g., *@Ottawa67sHockey*: Atmosphere in 67's Draft HQ is bordering on jovial ... everyone very pleased with first three picks today. #OHLDraft2016), closed team practices (e.g., *@SparkyFURY*: It's cold in Ottawa? Meh, not a problem for our guys as they warm-up for the training session. #FuryFC #FeelTheFury), and game days (e.g., *@REDBLACKS*: Getting ready for the game!; picture from dressing room).

Table 4.7

Humanizing the Organization Twitter Image Communication Theme

Image Communication Theme	Dimension Description	Example	Legitimacy Type	Benefit Diffusion
Humanizing the Organization	Messages presenting the human face of the team or organization. Included retweets of messages from the personal accounts of players or coaches, behind the scenes access, and human resource postings	<i>@TD_Place</i> : Want to work at <i>@TD_Place</i> ? Attend a job fair this Saturday where over 1,000 exciting opportunities are available! (September 13, 2016)	Managerial/ Technical	Moral
		<i>@BigJoeGrandJos</i> : Even Coach Brown got to meet the <i>@OttawaCitizen</i> RedBlacks Junior Reporter! #Lucky <i>@BigJoeGrandJos</i> (August 16, 2016)	Personal	Pragmatic

The second sub-code involved tweets from OSEG staff and management on a variety of team-related activities (e.g., *@67sRiley*: Me and my BFF *@OSEG_Michael* will be camping out the night before tickets go on sale *@TD_Place @onedirection*) and human resource-related matters (*@TD_Place*: We're looking for volunteers! Join our team and get free tickets to the game. Interested? Please email us staff@tdplace.ca).

The third sub-code included retweets from team management (e.g., *@OttawaFuryFC*: RT *@pauldalglis*: How many soccer teams can you walk out of your office and start watching a hockey game? Loving life at *@OttawaFuryFC*), athletes (e.g.,

@REDBLACKS: RT @YungLion17: Business trip to tiger town, all axes on deck! #RNation), and TD Place performers (e.g., @TD_Place: RT @samrobertsband: Sam Roberts Band is officially on #periscope. We're in Ottawa today broadcasting from TD Place). The final open code included school and community visits that were attended by team players and coaches (e.g., @OttawaFuryFC:@rafael_alves33 and Kyle Venter are at @GiveLifeOTT with @SparkyFURY and members of the @REDBLACKS. #GiveLife).

Hence, in these tweets, OSEG wanted its actions to be seen as remaining with or above the expected standards of commitment to team success both on and off the field (moral legitimacy diffusion). Insider-focused tweets could be said to seek managerial and technical legitimacy. By allowing Twitter followers “behind the curtain,” they were not only giving special privileges to their fans but also indicating the effectiveness and efficiency of their organizational practices (managerial) and the quality of their staff and team management services (technical). Tweets from OSEG staff, coaches, and athletes also sought technical legitimacy, demonstrating the qualifications and passion of their employees to the fans.

OSEG management tweets and the organization’s retweets of coaches and athletes also pursued personal legitimacy, as they attempted to obtain positive evaluations of their high-profile ambassadors through demonstration of their commitment to the team, to the fans, and to achieving excellence both on and off the field (pragmatic legitimacy diffusion).

Informational. These tweets informed the public about specific issues or potential concerns transpiring around the organization, stadium, or the Lansdowne Live

area, or they provided solutions to these issues (see Table 4.8). Thus, these were sociopolitical evaluations in terms of their content (i.e., informational about social political issues such as parking availability or how address ticket issues) by their very nature. The predominant topic was making people aware of the limited parking on site and suggesting alternatives (e.g., *@Ottawa67sHockey*: Hey does everyone know that a ticket to ANY *@Ottawa67sHockey* game gets u FREE #OCTranspo to & from game #NoNeedToPark).

Table 4.8

Informational Twitter Image Communication Theme

Image Communication Theme	Dimension Description	Example	Legitimacy Type	Benefit Diffusion
Informational	Tweets that inform about or provide solutions to specific problems or issues.	<i>@Ottawa67sHockey</i>: Hey does everyone know that a ticket to ANY <i>@Ottawa67sHockey</i> game gets u FREE #OCTranspo to & from game #NoNeedToPark http://t.co/C54Dd5LDI6 (September 20, 2016) <i>@OttawaFuryFC</i>: We are sold out of merchandise at our Ogilvie Rd location. Please stop by our store at 841 Bank for all your merchandise match (May 27, 2016).	Technical	Moral

Other recurring tweets in this image communication theme included informing fans about ways they could watch games (e.g., @OttawaFuryFC: Away games will be broadcast live on TV: @rogerstv22 @beINSPORTS @CBSSportsNet and radio: @TSN1200 & @945UNIQUEFM. Tune in tmrw at 6 p.m.!), traffic conditions (e.g., @TD_Place: Heading to the @Ottawa67sHockey game on Sunday? Expect some delays on Queen Elizabeth Drive due to construction), and weather (@REDBLACKS: UPDATE: We are on a game delay now as there's lightning in the area. We'll keep you posted on the status of the game).

One-time tweets included such items as logistical issues (e.g., @TD_Place: The Capital Tickets system is back online! You can now purchase tickets for tonight's match) and providing information about athlete Twitter accounts (e.g., Attention #Rnation! Jordan Verdone & Zach Evans R now on twitter. @ZEvans92 @verdone33). Tweets in this theme sought technical legitimacy by providing knowledge and moral benefits to the public.

Social validation. Retweets by the organization from the public that expressed support for OSEG or its teams were coded here (see Table 4.9). Essentially, these could be considered electronic word-of-mouth endorsements. As in the game/event experience and engagement themes, this legitimacy dimension typology was linkage-based. OSEG sought moral legitimacy benefits by attempting to be viewed as a legitimate social actor within the Ottawa community. These retweets consisted of only one sub-code that included online exhibitions of self-identity or gratitude to OSEG or its teams.

Table 4.9

Social Validation Twitter Image Communication Theme

Image Communication Theme	Dimension Description	Example	Legitimacy Type	Benefit Diffusion
Social Validation	Retweets by OSEG that demonstrate outside validation or acceptance from others	<i>@Ottawa67sHockey</i>: RT <i>@Immaculata_HS</i>: Love having the <i>@REDBLACKS</i> and <i>@Ottawa67sHockey</i> at Mac today! #lunchbunch https://t.co/eiN1F9agGn (September 23, 2016) <i>@67sRiley</i>: RT <i>@autumnzephyr</i>: I have an unhealthy obsession with a raccoon ... he cracks me up! #RaccoonsRule ❤️ <i>@67sRiley</i> #ConfessYourMascotCrush (March 3, 2015)	Linkage	Moral

Exhibitions of fanship included pictures of fans dressed up to show their support (e.g., *@REDBLACKS*: RT *@JLav1419*: I got a little carried away *@REDBLACKS* *@REDBLACKSCheer* #RedBlacksaccess #rnation #RedBlacks #sparkles #glamorous). Tweets conveyed fans' emotional attachment to the team (e.g., *@Ottawa67sHockey*: RT *@LMBBez*: Nail-biting time, hope that *@Ottawa67sHockey* can tie it up in the last couple of minutes #67s #OHLPlayoffs) or their game experience (e.g., *@OttawaFuryFC*: RT *@MikaylaSoucie*: Just had a blast at *@TD_Place* today for the very first *@OttawaFuryFC* game! *@OSEG_Corporate* you are doing a fabulous job).

Expressions of thanks by the fans and community included those from schools (e.g., @REDBLACKS: RT @Immaculata_HS: Love having the @REDBLACKS and @Ottawa67sHockey at Mac today! #lunchbunch), events (e.g., @REDBLACKS: RT @StephFata: Riley and Big Joe posing with fans today at #67sLunch #RedBlackslunch @Ottawa67sHockey @REDBLACKS), and community practices (e.g., @OttawaFuryFC: RT @ClavijoSoccer: Team captain @richieryan20 signing autographs for Canada's future players @TheOttawaRoyals #TeamClavijo).

Promotion/information sharing. Tweets that promoted a game, event, team, TD Place performer, sales messages, game highlights or updates, and contests all fell under this code (see Table 4.10). Of note is that, while details about upcoming games and game highlights have sometimes been coded distinctly from promotional tweets in some past research, this was generally done through the perspective of users (Gibbs, O'Reilly, & Brunette, 2014; Hambrick, Simmons, Greenhalgh, & Greenwell, 2010). From a PR perspective, these tweets were promotional in nature, using Twitter as an in-house publicity tool (Gibbs & Haynes, 2013; Price et al., 2013; Wysocki, 2012). Hence, tweets of this kind sought moral legitimacy through perceived dimensions of managerial and technical legitimacy typologies. This image theme can be viewed as seeking to preserve moral legitimacy to the public and pragmatic legitimacy to its engaged fans.

Table 4.10

Promotion/Information Sharing Twitter Image Communication Theme

Image Communication Theme	Dimension Description	Example	Legitimacy Type	Benefit Diffusion
Promoting / Information Sharing	Promoting a game, event, team, facility, sales message, sponsor message, or contests.	@TD_Place: @onedirection Is coming to #ourplace Thu Sep 10, 2015. Go to tdplace.ca for tickets and info. Nice jerseys boys! http://t.co/F56G78H894 (November, 2, 2014)	Managerial/ Personal Technical	Moral Pragmatic
	Also includes information dispersion activities (e.g., game highlights and in-game updates)	@Ottawa67sHockey: Special thanks to CAA for presenting all our @Ottawa67sHockey Community Practices across the region! @CAANEO (March 23, 2015)		

OSEG has some overt self-aggrandizing tweets (e.g., @REDBLACKS: 14,000 season ticket packages have been sold and 17,500 seats have been sold for the first game in franchise history on July 18). However, they mostly focused on more subtle forms of promotion through information sharing, such as game recaps (e.g., @Ottawa67sHockey: A late third period goal spelled the end for the #67s for the second-straight game. RECAP) and previews (@OttawaFuryFC: Here's our Starting XI for tonight's match against @RayoOKC. #FeelTheFury).

Other forms of self-promotion include conducting their own team interviews (e.g., @Ottawa67sHockey: Post-game interviews: Jeff Brown, @Evandehaan, @traviskonecny) and in-game reporting updates (e.g., @Ottawa67sHockey: WOOO! @traviskonecny has his second goal of the game just over two minutes into the second period!). They also promoted team athletes (e.g., @REDBLACKS: @cwillkl80's stats through three games: 25 catches. 493 yards. Six touchdowns) and contests (e.g., @REDBLACKS: Last chance to win tickets for tomorrow's game! To be eligible, fill in the blank: #IHeartFootball because ____).

An interesting note about the OSEG's conglomerate ownership structure as one group owning three different teams was their ability and willingness to cross-promote among their team properties using different team accounts (e.g., @OttawaFuryFC: LET'S GO @REDBLACKS!!! Good luck today lads, you got this! #FootballBuddies #GreyCup), mascot accounts (e.g., @67sRiley: Congrats @OttawaFuryFC and my buddy @SparkyFURY #Warriors Fall Season CHAMPS! #WEAREFURY), and even athletes' accounts (e.g., @REDBLACKS: RT @HenryBurris: Wishing the @Ottawa67sHockey best of luck in their playoff run. I hope to see everyone pack the house on Monday afternoon). A summary of finding results from study 2 is seen in Table 4.11.

Table 4.11

Summary of Operationalized OSEG Image Communication Themes.

Image Communication Theme	Dimension Description	Legitimacy Type	Benefit Diffusion
Affiliation	When OSEG seeks to show affiliation with other organizations or groups, such as its own league, other legitimate leagues, teams, athletes, celebrities, community groups, media, and the municipal government	Linkage	Moral/ Pragmatic
Competence / Success	When OSEG seeks to show excellence on the field and professionalism off the field	Personal/ Managerial Technical	Moral/ Pragmatic
Community Engagement	OSEG seeks to demonstrate its community focus, concern, and activities	Consequential/ Linkage	Moral/ Pragmatic
Direct Engagement	The extent to which OSEG seeks to engage other legitimate stakeholders online	Linkage	Pragmatic

Game or Event Experience	Tweets or retweets by the organization sharing positive game or event experiences by other legitimate stakeholders	Consequential/ Linkage/Technical	Moral/ Pragmatic
Gratitude/Fan Recognition	The extent to which OSEG acknowledges stakeholders	Linkage	Pragmatic
Humanizing the Organization	The extent to which OSEG seeks to relate to and create a more personal relationship with stakeholders	Managerial/ Technical/Personal	Moral/ Pragmatic
Informational	Tweets that provide information about or solutions to specific problems or issues	Technical	Moral
Social Validation	The extent to which OSEG shows its acceptance by other online stakeholders	Linkage	Moral
Promoting / Information Sharing	The extent to which OSEG promotes its teams, games, and financial stakeholders	Managerial/ Personal/ Technical	Moral/ Pragmatic

External Response Themes

Findings from the first study suggested that legitimacy is the underlying driver of image construction, providing evidence that a social theory PR approach to IM can be used. To help understand how the usage of social media explicitly affects organizational identity, image, and legitimacy, it was necessary to grasp how OSEG's image construction was manifested online, in the case of this research, using Twitter. As legitimacy is granted by society, it was important to understand how OSEG's image construction was accepted by its Twitter community. To create this insight, the linked responses to the image communication themes generated by OSEG's posts or retweets were also thematically coded, and their retweets were recorded. This coding ascertained the level of social acceptance of those themes through stakeholder legitimacy evaluations (Bitektine, 2011; Etter et al., 2017). This also allowed the capture of dialogue/interaction between the organization and its stakeholders, required in audience-based legitimacy studies (Beelitz & Merkl-Davies, 2012; Etter et al., 2017).

Bitektine and Haack (2015) noted that organization evaluations might be judged differently based on which set of norms an individual is influenced by (e.g., media, regulators, legal system) when perceiving a message. Lock et al. (2015) determined that this was also true in sport. They found that the extent to which an individual perceived a sport organization positively or negatively led to different interpretations of whether certain dimensions of that organization were legitimate. Therefore, by coding and measuring responses into one of three categories (information-seeking, negative sentiment, and positive sentiment), the researcher could identify positive or negative judgments made on each image communication coded theme that aided in constructing

OSEG's legitimacy (Haack, Pfarrer, & Scherer, 2014). A description of each response type and examples are summarized in Table 4.12.

Table 4.12

Coded Responses to OSEG Tweets and Retweets

Response	Description	Example
Information-Seeking	Includes Twitter responses to organizational tweets and retweets, asking specific questions or requesting information.	@johncanref: @Ottawa67sHockey @TD_Place Can we buy and adult ticket and get the 2 free minor hockey players tickets all at the box office before the game? (October 8, 2016) @BigBourget: @JesseWestwell @REDBLACKS @CFL where do you get the cow bells and how much? (August 11, 2015)
Negative Sentiment	Responses to OSEG tweets that assigned blame, dissatisfaction, noted mistakes, or team exaggerations, or related a bad experience.	@jlavigne: @Ottawa67sHockey drove from an hour away to watch, not gunna sit on a bus for another hour trying to get to the game. TD gunna fix this?? (February 29, 2015) @parent_ocdsb:@REDBLACKS no afternoon home games all year? As a season ticket holder who loves to bring my young sons, that is a profound disappointment (February 18, 2016) @Michael_Hynes91: @REDBLACKS @BCLions Game over thank you defense for sucking and same with the QB Aug 25 (August 25, 2016) @cassimbas: @OttawaFuryFC how long do we have to keep up with @pauldalGLISH?? If Mourinho got fired, Im sure we can do the same with Paul June 9, 2016)

Positive Sentiment	Responses that expressed support for the team, offered congratulations, thanks, or pointed out positive experiences or good works by the team	@StevieJukeJoint:@REDBLACKS @HenryBurris Here's to a great season to Hank and team, and God Bless back at y'all #RNation (June 16, 2016) @vgalpin5: @OttawaFuryFC @TD_Place @TD_Canada Good luck this afternoon! (July 5, 2015) @BellWarriors1:@HenryBurris @CFL @CFLCommunity He truly is an amazing ambassador & community leader. #ottawa #RNation (November 26, 2015) @djoddity:@Ottawa67sHockey @OSEG_Corporate Great news! Made it out to a game last month and had a blast - hope to see a few more this year! (December 16, 2014)
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For example, organizational tweets or retweets that have been retweeted or responded to positively by OSEG's followers could be considered consistent with the sum of the knowledge an individual maintained about an entity (Elsbach, 2003) when the social judgments of that communicated image are deemed acceptable. This notion was supported by Etter et al. (2017), who suggested the use of sentiment analysis to study the affect-based responses to organizational actions on social media, as it could be used as an indicator of organizational legitimacy.

As retweets usually represented a form of sharing with others (Naveed, Gottron, Kunegis, & Alhadi, 2011), this sharing could also be considered a form of acceptance or public agreement by that individual (Boyd, Golder, & Lotan, 2010). As Hogan (2010) and Stavros et al. (2014) argued, social media outlets could be considered virtual exhibition spaces to express themselves in a public venue. During open coding, the researcher observed that many positive tweets were primarily demonstrations of organizational support, expressing fanship and social identity, and displaying BIRGing behaviour (Hunt, Bristol, & Bashaw, 1999; Stavros et al., 2014). Other researchers have

also linked retweeting actions as signs of identification with a brand (Kim, Sung, & Kang, 2014) or team (Williams, Chinn, & Suleiman, 2014), expressing support or validation of the information contained in the tweet (Boyd et al., 2010; Walker, Baines, Dimitri, & Macdonald, 2017).

However, negative comments did not necessarily translate into CORFing behaviour (Snyder et al., 1986), where the individual attempts to disassociate themselves from the perceived-as-unsuccessful team. During open coding, while most negative replies were coded to assigning blame or dissatisfaction with OSEG or its teams, others simply conveyed a particular bad experience (e.g., that the arena was too hot at an Ultimate Fighting Championship event; expressing frustration with a player, coach, or team management after a particular loss; or a string of losses). Such responses varied in intensity but shared a common characteristic in that they were not enduring. They failed to be a topic on the platform for more than a day or two. Nevertheless, such negative responses, while brief, might be considered as having failed the social judgment of that individual's scrutiny, producing an identity gap between the individual and OSEG.

Information-seeking responses were generally neutral in nature and helped OSEG address the requests of a particular Twitter user. This request also allowed OSEG to reach out simultaneously to many others with similar interests. This is also valuable, because as Williams et al. (2014) found, most of their study's participants (fans) used Twitter mainly to visit and observe, rather than to participate/tweet.

As with the image communication themes, response sentiment categories were also coded non-exclusively. For example, a fan complaining about why an Ultimate

Fighting Championship show was so warm in the arena would be coded under both information-seeking and negative sentiment.

Content Analysis

After the OSEG posts and the subsequent linked responses of each of the eight Twitter accounts were coded, individual team and mascot accounts were combined to provide a holistic view of each team's Twitter activity. The resulting five sources of data were then compared: RedBlacks, Fury, 67's, OSEG corporate, and TD Place (Appendix S). During the review, a strong homogeneity was evident among the image communication themes, with four of the five data sources mirroring each other (see Figure 4.2; figures were created through content analysis, as explained on page 119, with the resulting numbers graphed in Microsoft Excel). The fifth data source, the TD Place Twitter feed, showed lower levels of community engagement, competence or success, and promotional/information sharing, likely due to its focus on single-event shows and occurrences at the stadium, which did not require sustained image-building efforts. For example, while a specific concert tour may engage fans and promote themselves on the artist or tour's own Twitter account, it had no control of TD Place feed, nor would it be an efficient use of resources to extensively engage the Ottawa community, converse with arena fans, or promote other concert dates in other cities through a geographically-focused Twitter account.

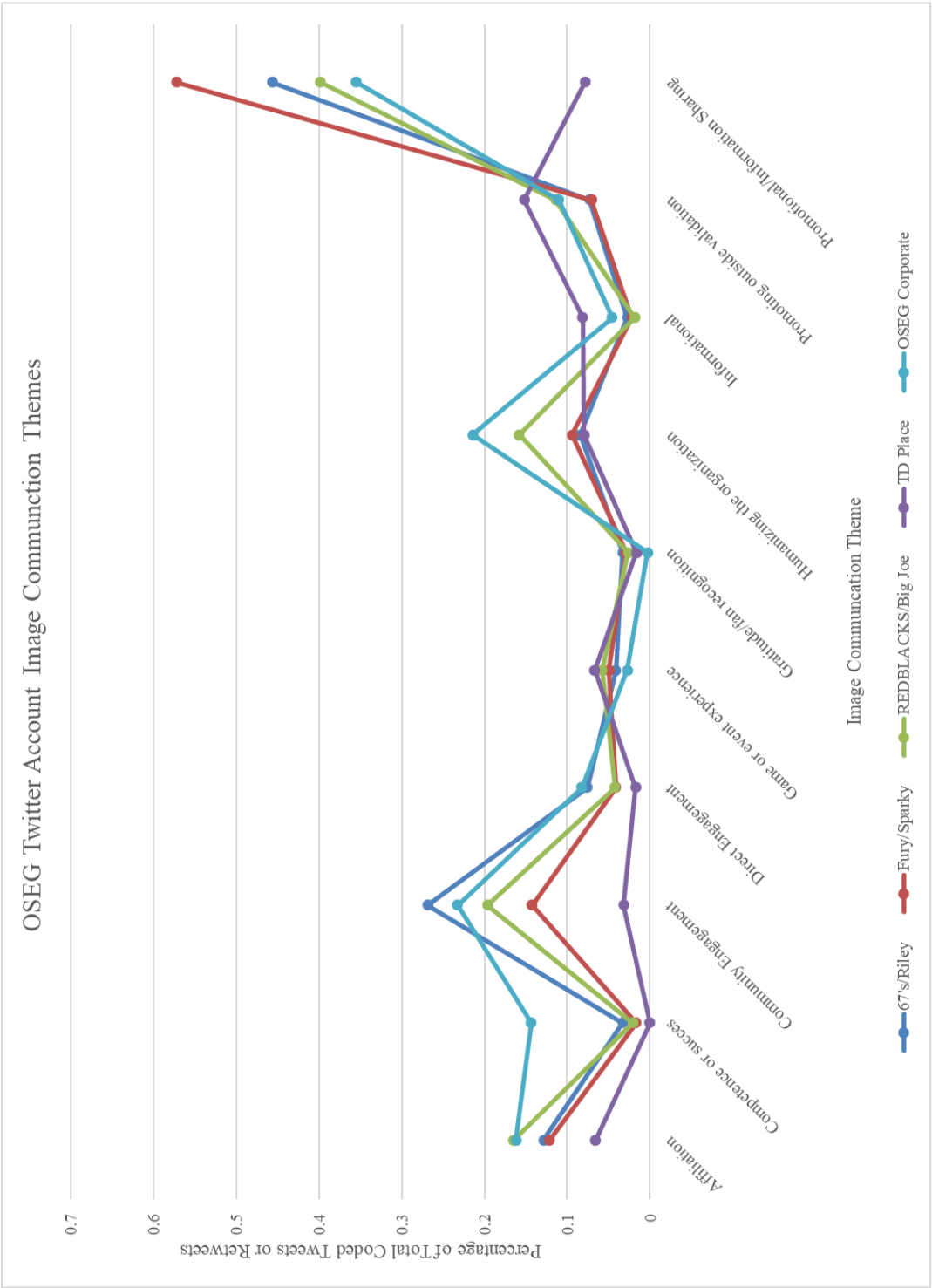


Figure 4.2. Comparison of OSEG team, corporate, and stadium image communication.

The homogeneity among the data feeds might be explained by the presence of isomorphic pressures among OSEG's Twitter accounts, an explanation congruent with research regarding the online content of sport organizations (Lamertz et al., 2008; Naraine & Parent, 2016). As Lamertz et al. (2008) noted about professional sport team websites, "Projecting an organizational image that appeals to stakeholder audiences with diverging demands and expectations is a critical managerial challenge for professional sport organizations" (p. 243). They theorized that professional sport organizations operated in an institutional environment of shared meanings and relationships due to their social-cultural nature, in which the organization's symbolic image became a reference point for stakeholder identification and was constituted as part of the social identity of its fans (Kwon, Trail, & Lee, 2008; Stavros et al., 2014).

In their seminal work on isomorphism, DiMaggio and Powell (1983) identified three isomorphic pressures: normative, coercive, and mimetic. In this case, the same OSEG employees worked across the eight Twitter accounts, indicating the presence of normative pressure, which is pressure to conform, often as a result of drawing the on same pool of resources; coercive pressure, resulting from operating within the same sociopolitical structure/environment; and mimetic pressure, or pressure to mimic the behaviour of other successful organizations in an industry category because of their success. Mimetic pressure was present due to the social-cultural nature of sport itself, as it seeks to identify with fans (Lamertz et al., 2008).

This broad homogeneity was also found in the responses to the coded image-themed communication activities of OSEG (Figure 4.3). This finding indicated a strong shared social value system within the Twitter community of OSEG-affiliated accounts.

The spikes of positive response points on the graph implied that the Twitter community approved of OSEG's actions on the social media platform. The spike of negative-themed replies around the soccer team were a result of complaints about the coaching staff and general manager. This was due to the team languishing at the bottom of the standings in the NASL after a successful season the year before, which saw the team advance to the league championship game, finishing second. These negative comments were often replies to communication of game outcomes from promotional/information sharing tweets, with fans expressing their dismay at the score and game summaries. The other variant spike on the graph regarded positive replies to direct engagement activities of the TD Place account. This spike was the result of those in the Twitter community expressing their fanship about an upcoming concert or event at the stadium.

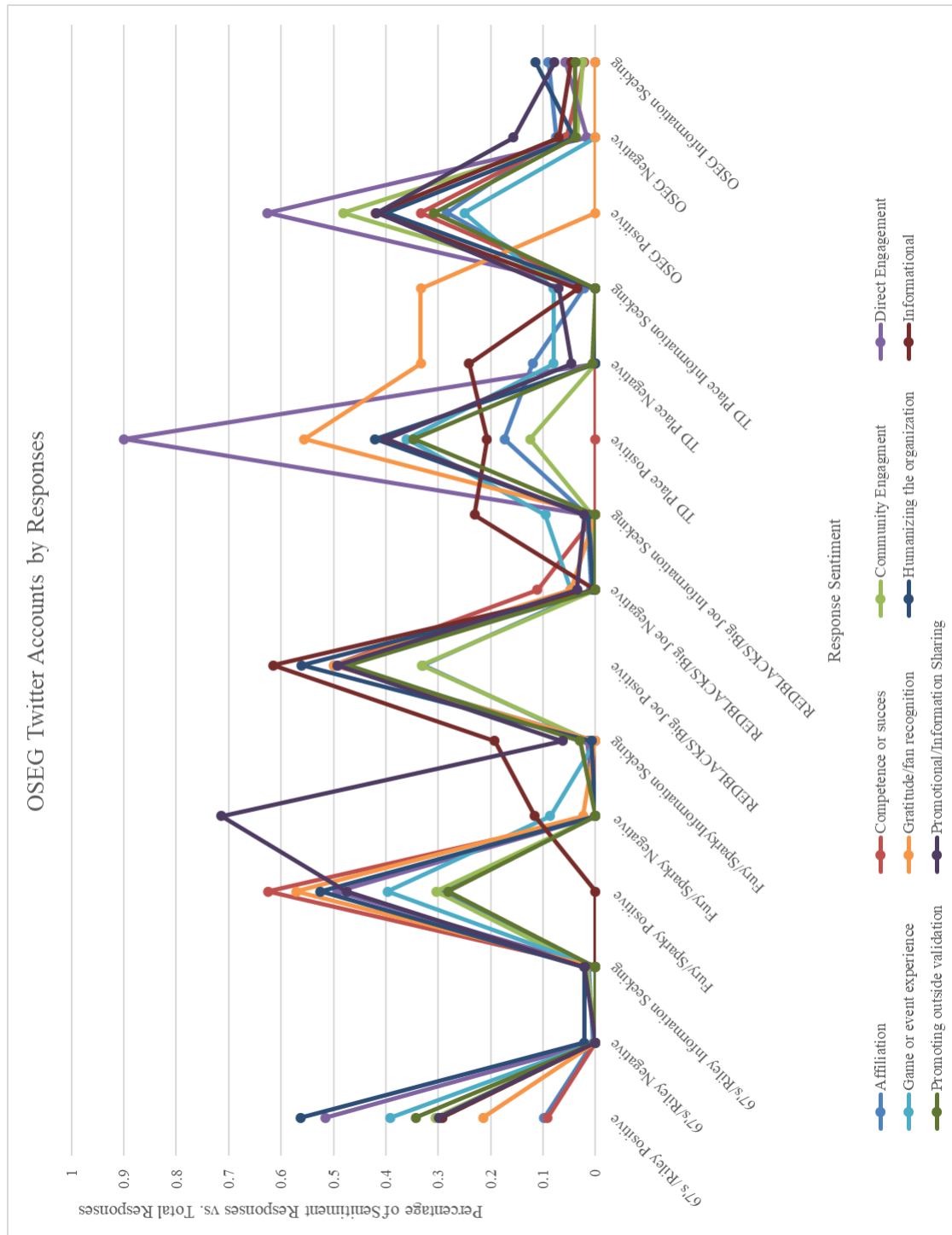


Figure 4.3. Comparison of OSEG team, corporate, and stadium image communication theme responses.

Figure 4.4 also illustrated a broad homogeneity among retweeting activities, although less so than the previous two figures. The most significant anomalies appeared in the higher number of retweets experienced by the RedBlacks in the themes of community engagement and game or event experience. This is likely explained by the popularity of the team vis-à-vis OSEG's other teams, as fans were more apt to show their affiliation with the team through the simpler action of retweeting. This indicates the RedBlacks likely hold the highest social identity strength among OSEG's teams. Another variance occurred in the higher number of retweets in the TD Place Twitter account regarding humanizing the organization and promotion/information sharing. Many of these tweets were announcements of concerts or events at TD Place and featured images of the performers. This would be considered highly salient news and would be more likely to be shared through an individual's social media network (Youssef, 2014).

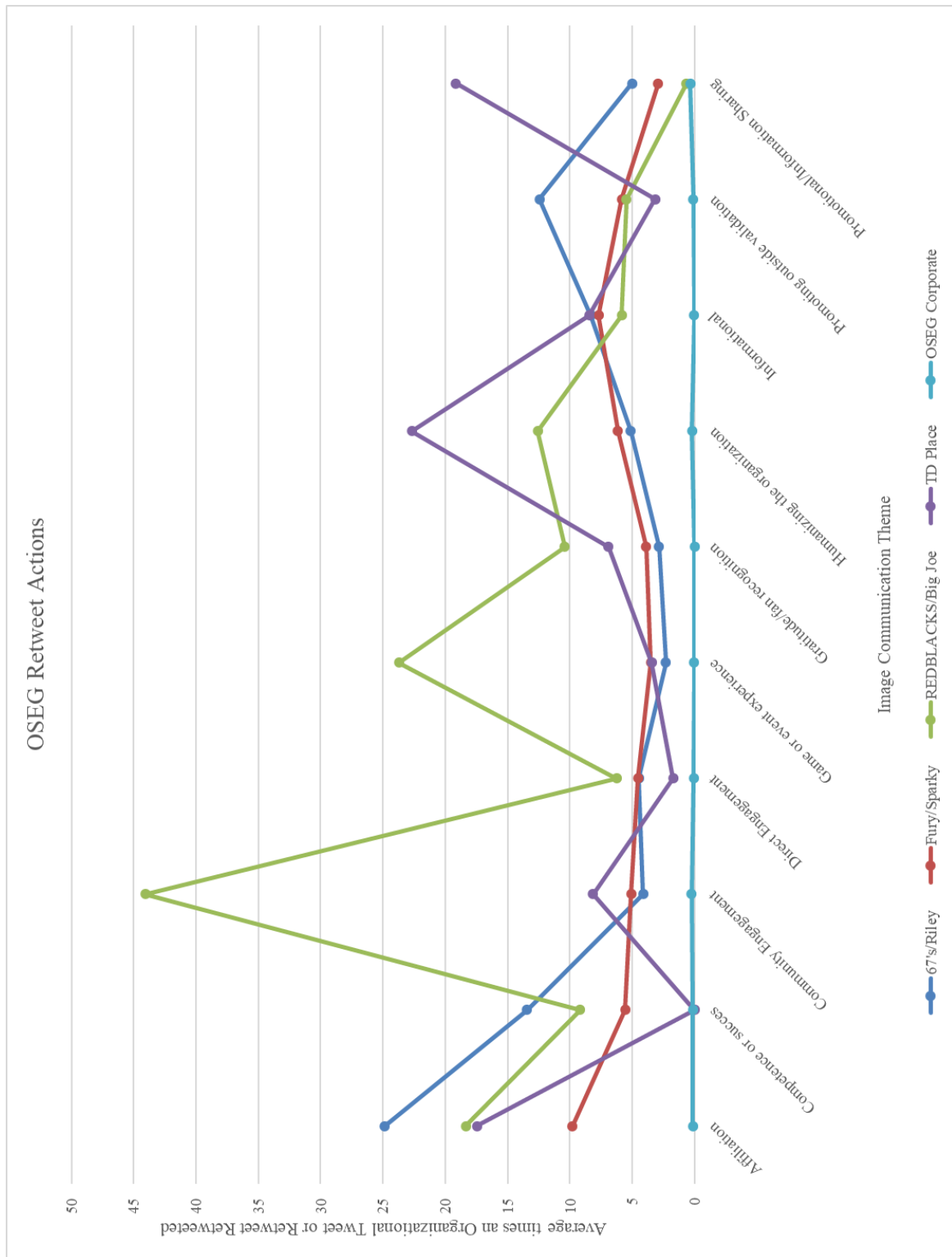


Figure 4.4. Comparison of OSEG team, corporate, and stadium retweets.

However, when observed in the larger context of the research, the anomalies among the five data sources were minor and not significant to the research questions. Thus, further analysis of OSEG's Twitter legitimacy-seeking activities and the legitimacy-granting activities of their followers was completed in aggregate. In other words, the analysis could be performed from the perspective of OSEG as a whole, encompassing all eight Twitter feeds.

Through the aggregate measurement of the number of tweets coded to each image communication theme, an indication was established of the emphasis of what type of aspects of legitimacy-seeking behaviour. Responses and retweets to those tweets indicated if those legitimacy-seeking behaviours were successful. A summary of the findings is shown in Tables 4.13 and 4.14. The first column of Table 4.13 lists the image communication themes that emerged. The second column is the number of tweets or retweets by OSEG, coded by image communication theme. The third column references the total replies to OSEG's tweets or retweets from column two, also coded by theme. Column four is the total number of retweets of organization-generated messages (both tweets and retweets). The final two columns are the percentage of OSEG tweets or retweets that were replied to (column three divided by column two) and the average number of times an OSEG tweet or retweet was itself retweeted (column four divided by column two). Table 4.14 further broke down the replies to OSEG tweets and retweets into positive, negative, and neutral categories.

Table 4.13

Coded Responses to OSEG Tweets and Retweets Collected Between July 21, 2016-October 20, 2016.

Image Communication Themes	Total Tweets and Organizational Retweets	Total Replies	Total Retweets of Organizational Tweets or Retweets	% of Total Tweets and Organizational Retweets to Replies	Average times an Organizational Tweet or Retweet was Retweeted
Affiliation	502	122	7,180	0.243	14.3
Competence Success	112	41	894	0.366	8.0
Community Engagement	660	129	11,154	0.200	16.9
Direct Engagement	185	99	1,045	0.535	5.7
Game or Event Experience	200	64	1,426	0.322	7.13
Gratitude/Fan Recognition	97	34	550	0.351	5.7
Humanizing the Organization	456	201	4,271	0.441	9.4
Informational	131	37	1,156	0.282	8.8
Social Validation	385	175	1,878	0.455	4.9
Promotion Information Sharing	1,986	459	16,968	0.231	8.5
Total*	3,905	1,087	39,720	0.278	10.2

*Due to non-exclusive coding, the summation of each image communication theme does not equal the total.

Table 4.14

Summary of Twitter Findings

Image Communication Theme	Organization Retweets and Replies	Positive	% Positive	Negative	% Negative	Info Seeking (neutral)	% Info Seeking
Affiliation	773	182	0.235	18	0.023	14	0.018
Competence/ Success	263	69	0.262	9	0.0342	2	0.008
Community Engagement	560	187	0.334	3	0.005	8	0.0143
Direct Engagement	778	407	0.523	2	0.003	16	0.021
Game or Event Experience	219	95	0.434	12	0.055	12	0.0548
Gratitude/Fan Recognition	129	64	0.496	7	0.054	0	0
Humanizing the Organization	1000	522	0.522	8	0.008	26	0.026
Informational	207	61	0.295	23	0.111	17	0.082
Social Validation	627	238	0.380	3	0.005	5	0.008
Promotion/Information Sharing	2214	935	0.422	115	0.0519	93	0.042
Total*	5170	2157	0.417	179	0.0346	160	0.0309

*Due to non-exclusive coding, the summation of each image communication theme does not equal the total.

Additional content analysis findings included that OSEG itself only directly responded to fan responses 301 times, representing a 5.8% response rate. This finding was further broken down by the type of response to which OSEG responded, with 105 responses to information-seeking questions (offering answers); 151 to positive responses (acknowledging fan support); and 45 to negative sentimental responses (explaining a situation, offering redress, or asking for the Twitter user to direct message [i.e., privately message] the organization). A lack of existing comparable data in the literature made it difficult to compare these values with what might be expected.

Legitimacy-seeking activities. Table 4.13 established that the most common use of Twitter by OSEG was promotional/information sharing in nature (Table 4.10), with this element included in 1,986 tweets or 50.9% of total recorded tweets. It was also the most responded-to type of tweet (459) and received the highest number of retweets (16,986). However, these tweets garnered responses only 23.0% of the time (ranking ninth among the image communication dimensions) and averaged 8.5 retweets per tweet (ranking fifth). Promotion/information sharing also ranked fifth in the percentage of positive sentiment responses (42.2%) and fourth in negative sentiment responses (5.2%).

There was a considerable drop in numbers (1,986 to 660) between the first and second most prevalent image themes. The second included displays of community engagement (660 tweets, 16.9%). When digging deeper into this theme, explained in Table 4.2, most of the tweets, 622 (94.2%), involved player visits to schools, community practices, or community events. The remaining demonstrated concern for environmental or social causes, acceptance by the community, or employee/owner community activities. Concerning legitimacy scrutiny, a dichotomy existed insofar as this legitimacy-seeking

dimension ranked last (10th) in response rate (19.5%) but first in proportionately generating retweets (16.9).

The third-ranked legitimacy-seeking dimension by number of tweets, as noted in Table 4.1, was affiliation (502, 12.9%), and it demonstrated similar characteristics to the community engagement theme. It exhibited a low response rate, second-to-last vis-à-vis the other themes (24.3%), but had a high retweet measure (14.3, second).

Legitimacy-granting activities. Of the 3,905 coded tweets, 1,087 recorded responses occurred, a response ratio of 27.8%. Of these responses, the clear majority were positive (41.7%), compared to 3.5% that had a negative sentiment and 3.1% that were information-seeking. This finding indicated that OSEG's legitimacy-seeking Twitter activities could be viewed as successful, as these met or exceeded the criteria with which its followers made their social judgments of the organization. This finding was also reflected in the 10.2 retweet average generated for every tweet or retweet the organization sent.

Predictably, direct engagement-themed tweets garnered the highest response rate (53.5%). They also generated the highest-rated positive response (52.3%) and the lowest level of negative sentiment (0.3%). This theme also had the second lowest retweet rate (5.6). This finding might be due to the nature of the tweets, which implied a response was the expected subsequent action of those receiving the message. For example, OSEG and sponsor Molson Brewery had a frequent forum called “#AskABud,” where a RedBlacks player would answer questions on Twitter for an allotted time.

The image theme of social validation was retweeted at an average rate of 4.9 retweets per tweet. This finding was not a sign of low social acceptance of the message

but rather an acknowledgement that OSEG Twitter users were not as socially connected to other fans. Therefore, they were less likely to distribute the tweet to their own online social network. Gratitude and fan recognition experienced the second lowest retweet rate.

Study Two Summary

The Twitter findings supported other studies' findings that Twitter is primarily used as a platform for promotion and broadcasting information (e.g. Abeza, 2016; Below et al. 2016; Filo et al., 2015). In the case of OSEG, promotional/information sharing tweets accounted for 50.9% of all their activity on the social media platform. Thus, OSEG seeks to primarily attain legitimacy associated with this image communication theme, creating messages that highlighted positive team and organization performance (managerial legitimacy), player and staff achievements (personal legitimacy), and game day or customer services (technical legitimacy).

It also suggests that Twitter continues to be underutilized as a dialogic communication tool (e.g. Kent & Taylor, 2016; Lovejoy et al, 2012; Macnamara, 2015), with OSEG responding to 5.8% of tweets. An OSEG tweet or retweet generated a response or an additional retweet 27.8% of the time. However, that response rate increased to 53.5% when the tweet sought to directly engage OSEG or other members of the Twitter community. Finally, the low number of negative responses to organizational tweets (3.5%) indicate that OSEG's online Twitter activities are meeting social norms or are being granted legitimacy by their Twitter community. This supports the findings in first phase of the study, which concluded that OSEG had successfully negotiated the meaning of its image and had had attained a mutual understanding of legitimacy.

However, it was unclear to what extent the negotiation of image and legitimacy was enacted through Twitter, due to the lack of dialogue on the platform.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

In their assessment of the state of the field of PR, Botan and Taylor (2004) suggested that a co-creational approach, one that focused on long-term relationships, shared meanings, and interpretations beyond the simple achievement of organizational goals, was the future of PR research. This indicated that PR should be viewed in a social context (Ihlen & Verhoeven, 2012), where social reality is a dynamic process (Bentele, 1997). As organizational image is the holistic outward expression of an organization's identity (Lamertz et al., 2008; Scott & Lane, 2000), to achieve image co-creation between an organization and its stakeholders, an understanding of legitimacy and its negotiation between the organization and its stakeholders must be acquired.

The first study sought to understand how organizational identity, image, and legitimacy interacted in a social media world and how the understanding of these interactions relate to the co-creation of organizational image in a sport organization. The second study sought to explore the more specific, explicit effects of social media in terms of identity, legitimacy, and image, and how these organizational constructs may be manifested through social media itself. This was done by studying how the use of social media, in this case Twitter, expresses organizational identity, image, and legitimacy. It also sought to understand how Twitter usage directly affects co-creation of organizational image in a sport organization.

Study One Discussion

Internal Identity and Image Perspective

As established on pages 128 to 134, most employees of the organization viewed the outward expressions of their team's identity, expressed as image, as indistinguishably tied to brand management, a notion previously suggested by Agyemang and Williams (2013), who also noted a dearth of literature relating the two concepts. The concepts of identity, image, and their relationship to brand continue to suffer from a lack of conceptual clarity, as the terms continue to be used in different contexts in reference to different meanings, not only in academic circles, as discussed on pages 51-52, but also in practice.

In this research, findings showed that internal stakeholders primarily interpreted organizational IM from a marketing viewpoint, wherein each team was considered a brand. This finding was at odds with Lock et al.'s (2015) assertion that image management was viewed within the broader context of the organization itself, rather than that of branding studies, which refer to the management of a brand, a set of products marketed to product consumers under a single name and icon (Agyemang & Williams, 2013).

In a sport setting, MacIntosh and Doherty (2007), Robinson (2013), and Pronschinske et al. (2012) suggested that as sport and recreation organizational cultures become increasingly transparent, the external perceptions of the organization's core values become more important to success. OSEG recognized this importance through how they perceived their identity, which is based on an external-oriented focus that required the transparent communication of their organizational values to help them build

community relationships. The notions of transparency, customer/community focus, and being communicative were evident in all team images; therefore, these could be considered part of the core of OSEG's identity. It was through the customer/community focus that OSEG employees recognized that context (perspective) played an important role in how the images of their teams were perceived.

This in turn influenced their outward expressions of identity, as they included their understanding of the construed image of the organization, as formed by listening activities when taking communicative actions. This discursive process between the organization and its audience resulted in OSEG employees understanding the dynamic relationship among the images of its different teams and its overarching corporate identity characteristics. Specifically, it explained how OSEG saw each team as distinct but part of a larger whole. It also allowed OSEG to gain insight into knowing when team images needed to be emphasized individually or collectively to strengthen to the organization's overall credibility.

This process supported claims by Scott and Lane (2000) and Gioia et al. (2014): identity is no longer defined only by organization members but also by its stakeholders, and identity is the malleable consequence of the fluidity of organizational image. As there was a significant convergence of individual team characteristics (customer and community orientation, being communicative and transparent, and building tradition and legacy), these characteristics may be considered OSEG's organizational identity.

In this study, OSEG appeared to have achieved the continuance of a strong organizational image. While the study took place during a time of organizational stability in which OSEG was successful in its efforts to meet societal norms, the achievement in

meeting these norms and OSEG's external focus on the community in which it operated also suggests a flexible organizational image and identity that could adapt to stakeholder expectations (Sha, 2009) while maintaining core values (Gioia et al., 2013).

Indeed, the current state of OSEG's identity is reminiscent of how Gioia et al. (2014) described the evolution of organizational identity to be based on image, the projection of identity in terms of how the organization expects its stakeholders to want to perceive it. This agility in crafting its image to match the expected desires of the community suggests continued potential for flexibility going forward, although it is possible that the perception of having already met fan expectations could prevent OSEG from continuing to adapt responsively as those expectations change.

This finding supported the research's supposition that IM from a PR social theory context is the co-creational negotiation of knowledge, meaning, and behaviour among an organization and its various stakeholders (Taylor, 2010). It also evidenced the challenges presented with the dialogic requirements of PR, in which OSEG could no longer tightly control strategic messages with its publics but instead attempted to cultivate shared understandings through organizational listening and a perspective-based approach to image communication. The need for this shared understanding assisted in the cocreation process through proactive seeking and learning from OPR interactions (Devine-Wright, Fleming, & Chadwick, 2001; Westerwick, Kleinman, & Knobloch-Westerwick, 2013). This finding is especially important in sport, where fans, stakeholders, and the organization itself might have differing priorities; winning championships or community involvement might take precedence over financial outcomes (Smith & Stewart, 1999, 2010).

Internal Perspectives of Legitimacy

Interviews revealed that OSEG's organizational legitimacy consisted of developing relationships with the community in which they operated. This was operationalized through being communicative, transparent, and building trust with their stakeholders over time, often expressed as being credible. Research findings also indicated that OSEG's understanding of legitimacy shared similar characteristics with its understanding of identity and therefore image. When discussing their understandings of both concepts, the prominent themes of i) communication or being communicative and ii) being community-oriented/building a relationship with the community could be found in both.

In addition, much like image, OSEG's understandings of legitimacy did not vary on a team-by-team basis but instead were infused throughout all organizational activities. This indicated that OSEG understood the need for the social approval and goodwill sought by many professional sport organizations (Babiak & Trendafilova, 2011; Heinze et al., 2014).

These findings suggest that from OSEG's viewpoint, legitimacy and image appeared to be interrelated concepts, supporting King & Whetten's (2008) assertion that image is a complex set of organizational expressions that help determine an organizations' perceived legitimacy and distinctiveness. However, as noted earlier, from a social theory PR perspective, where seeking legitimacy and legitimation drive PR activities such as IM (Waeraas, 2009), it can instead be postulated that it is not identity and the resulting image perceptions of that identity that help determine an organization's legitimacy; it is legitimacy that determines identity and subsequently image. Building on

this thought, it can be said that organizational images are then scrutinized by stakeholders in the form of social judgements, which Bitekine (2011) termed legitimacy dimensions.

This proposed notion of legitimacy driving image and identity is supported by the finding that OSEG, in successfully attaining a co-created image, incorporated the requirement for social approval into its identity, as witnessed through its customer/stakeholder/community orientation, and being communicative and transparent with the Ottawa community. Thus, OSEG essentially made legitimacy an organizational characteristic, a strategic process that connected the notions of culture, learning, corporate values, and social responsibility (Cummings & Daellenbach, 2009).

Deephouse and Suchman (2008) stated that legitimacy was assessed by multiple audiences concerning multiple activities. Therefore, organizations could become “more legitimate” by becoming legitimate to more stakeholders in more of their activities (Deephouse & Suchman, 2008). This concept could be seen in the study’s findings, specifically around OSEG’s use of perspective-based collective versus distinguishing team imagery grounded on perceived audience needs. These communicated images provided tangible aspects of organizational actions, structures, or outcomes on which stakeholders could make social judgments of the organization (Bitekine, 2011).

Aspects of organizational image were judged through multiple legitimacy dimensions and vice-versa, indicating they were non-exclusive. For example, OSEG’s image of being customer- and community-oriented could be judged by outsiders through their level of communication with these groups (organizational actions), which created a sense of accessibility (organizational outcome). Alternatively, expressions of OSEG’s

communicative identity element might be expressed and judged through the same organizational actions and outcomes.

Thus, IM can be said to be the seeking of legitimacy through organizational image-creating and reinforcing activities, and the granting of legitimacy is conferred through stakeholder reactions to those images after making a sociopolitical judgment regarding said images. This finding was important to PR, as it must focus not just on the communication process but also its consequences and effectiveness (Rakow & Nastasia, 2009). However, to fully understand the co-creational IM process, an understanding of how external stakeholders make and communicate their social political judgments (a legitimacy-granting behaviour) must also be considered, something that could not be done without the bidirectional nature of dialogic communication that underpins this research.

External Image Perspective

As stated by Pronschinske et al. (2012), a profound relationship exists among sports, PR, organizational image, and organizational identity, particularly as fans sought authenticity and transparency in the relationships being established, fostering a sense of trust. Much like the internal stakeholder perspective, interviews revealed varied responses to OSEG and team image distinctions. As noted earlier, these responses could be categorized by stakeholder context and the nature of their relationship with OSEG and its teams. From a government perspective, responses reflected an understanding of the teams and organization as distinct entities from the fan perspective, but in their professional dealings, they saw them as one organization. A similar understanding was discovered for OSEG sponsors and media.

The role of context in image perception was also evident when speaking to league and sport stakeholders, fans, Twitter followers, and community groups. Within these stakeholders, specific team image distinction and interrelatedness were less clearly defined. Most stakeholders from these groups revealed they saw each team's image as distinct, with acknowledgment of some interconnectedness.

External stakeholders were placed on an interconnectedness/distinction continuum (Figure 5.1) related to their level and engagement-context with OSEG or one of its teams. Stakeholders' connectedness to the team was assessed by the interviewer based on participants' responses during the interview process, specifically on how they described the number of interactions they had with a team or OSEG itself, as increased interactions have been demonstrated to increase stakeholder knowledge and emotions towards a team, in turn influencing their thoughts toward the organization/team (Brodie et al., 2011). The strength of stakeholder connectedness was judged from the response to two interview questions. The first was if they considered themselves a sports fan and a fan of the organization, and the second helped assess the degree of their attachment to OSEG and its teams by asking if they interpret praise or denigration of the organization/team as a personal compliment or insult.

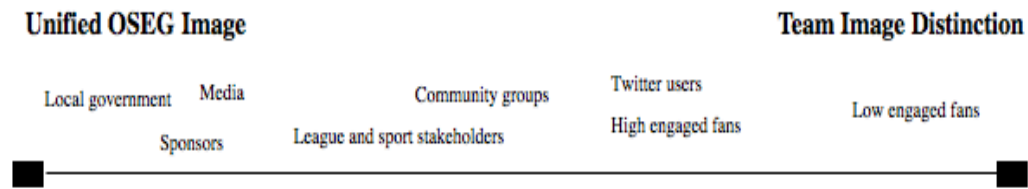


Figure 5.1. OSEG image continuum.

The external perspective did not define team image distinction as clearly as did the internal perspective. However, much like in the internal interviews, there emerged similar image sub-themes around the themes of customer/community-orientation and being communicative. These were similar to the images OSEG sought to project both as an organization and through its teams (customer- and community-orientated, being communicative, and being transparent).

This indicated that external stakeholders appeared to have accepted these image attributes, as similar themes of being communicative and customer- and community-oriented emerged when they discussed how they perceived OSEG and its teams. Thus, OSEG had successfully negotiated the meanings of identity and image with its external stakeholders, achieving a co-created image. Therefore, no identity gap or impetus for image change (Gioia & Thomas, 1996; Reger et al., 1994) existed during the course of the research. This finding demonstrated that OSEG had effectively cultivated (Grunig, 2013) a co-created image equilibrium (Taylor, 2010) with its stakeholders.

External Legitimacy Perspective

When external stakeholders discussed their thoughts on what makes OSEG legitimate as a sport organization, the themes of communication/responsiveness, credibility/consistency, trust, and community connection emerged. These responses were similar in terms of how they perceived OSEG itself (customer- and community-oriented, communicative). This finding supported the supposition from the internal stakeholder interviews that legitimacy and image appear to be interrelated concepts. This supports the notion that, from a social theory PR perspective, a company's activities are about "developing (or destroying) a company's legitimacy or 'license' to operate in its community" (Ihlen & Ruler, 2009, p. 1). Therefore, it can be said that OSEG's negotiation of a co-created image is ultimately a legitimacy-seeking venture. Thus, when image is successfully co-created, it is the equivalent of society granting legitimacy to the organization, as it has avoided betraying their expectations.

IM as a Legitimacy Seeking Process

Traditionally, IM was viewed through PR studies as an instrumental, transmission-based approach that prepossesses one-way communication or projections of identity to intended audiences that ipso facto produce a desired image in the minds of the target audience (Massey, 2003; Nekmat et al., 2014). However, Gioia et al. (2014) and Scott and Lane (2000) reasoned that identity was no longer defined only by organization members through identity projections but also by its stakeholders. As discussed on pages 57 to 58 and visually articulated in Appendix D, external images (both construed and desired) become the means through which identity was eventually defined. Gioia et al. (2014) theorized that a reflexive comparison between "self-reflection" and "other-

reflection” could generate an identity change, bringing identity into alignment with construed external image. Working under the supposition that transparent image communication of identity is required in today’s digital media environment (Taiminen et al., 2015), an identity gap between the construed (present) understanding of their external image and an organization’s desired (future) external image would then be analogous as a change motivator.

Implications of this approach signified that identity construction might not always be based on organizational considerations of “who we are” and “who we want to be.” Rather, identity change might also result purely from a consideration of two external construed images: “how we think they see us” and “how we want them to see us” (Gioia et al., 2014, p. 20). Hence, external images (both construed and desired) became the means through which OSEG’s identity was eventually defined.

However, as established from the study findings, co-creational IM from a social theory PR perspective can be said to be a manifestation of organizational legitimacy-seeking and societal legitimacy-granting activities. Following this thought, identity gaps are not just differences between construed and desired images; they are in fact legitimacy dimensions (stakeholders’ perceptions of organizational images, which are scrutinized in the form of social judgments [Bitektine, 2011; Lock et al., 2015]) that have not meet stakeholder expectations and so were not granted legitimacy. Therefore, to achieve co-creation in IM, an equilibrium must be established between perceptions of legitimacy held by internal and external stakeholders.

Findings show that OSEG succeeded in this by fostering an organizational identity that they transparently projected to their stakeholders, and those stakeholders

accepted it as legitimate. This resulted in an absence of identity gaps, or impetuses for identity change. Essentially, this makes the co-creation of image through legitimacy-seeking and granting activities cyclical. It also suggests that an organization can manage its image through the identification of legitimacy dimensions, images upon which stakeholders will make a sociopolitical decision. As outlined in Appendix E, these are legitimacy dimensions that are based on pragmatic (do the perceptions of the organization align with the specific stakeholder?) or moral (do the perceptions of the organization align with social and cultural norms?) legitimacy.

As noted in the previous paragraph, the co-creation of image through legitimacy-seeking and granting activities is cyclical. Using the context of OSEG, this process is visually outlined in Figure 5.2. Findings revealed that OSEG's teams held distinct but interrelated characteristics that were emphasized based on audience context. However, it was noted that each of its three teams shared common image attributes: an external focus, being communicative, and transparency. Study findings demonstrated these identity attributes were also mirrored in their understanding of organizational legitimacy. Thus, expressions of OSEG's identity and legitimacy-seeking behaviour through image were equivalent.

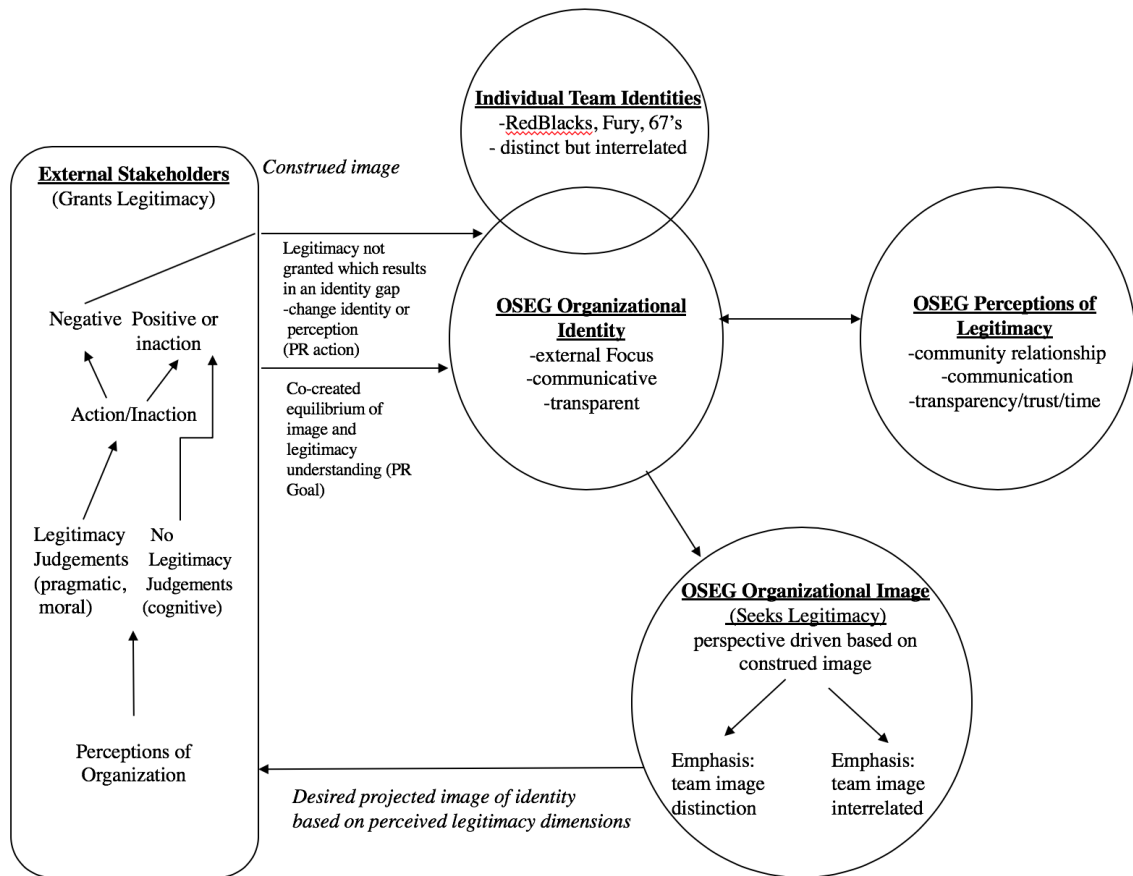


Figure 5.2. OSEG image management legitimacy seeking process.

As visualized in in Figure 5.2, employees' understanding of audience context affected the requirements for team image to be viewed in the best manner. This was reflected in their perspective-driven use of team versus OSEG image attributes, or what they perceived as important legitimacy dimensions. These were the aspects of OSEG's image that were relevant to the stakeholder context. Such images were then processed by external stakeholders through their perceptions of the organization. If the perceived image required no sociopolitical judgment, because the team image was "taken for granted" (cognitive legitimacy), then no dialogic action by the external stakeholder would

be taken, as the image was granted legitimacy without thought. If the image required a sociopolitical legitimacy judgment (pragmatic or moral legitimacy), an affirmative judgement, or a legitimacy-granting decision, this would result in positive feedback to the organization or inaction from a dialogic perspective. If the sociopolitical judgment was negative, i.e., dissenting with the stakeholder's expectant image, then legitimacy was not granted, and an identity gap would occur. This identity gap dialogically would take the form of negative feedback to the organization.

An example of a negative feedback situation was articulated by stakeholders during interviews. It arose prior to the data collection for the study, when TD Place stadium was being constructed. During this time, OSEG was experiencing negative feedback from the local community because they were worried that the stadium and the subsequent influx of people it would bring to the local neighbourhood would change the character of the community, affecting local businesses and straining existing infrastructure with regard to traffic and parking.

In short, some of the residents of the Glebe felt that their concerns were not being heard or addressed and therefore made the sociopolitical judgment to withhold their legitimacy for the stadium building project and, by association, OSEG itself by bringing their issues to the attention of the media and using social media to organize gatherings, picketing, or protests at City Hall. These actions were demonstrations of the negative actions some members of the Glebe community undertook after they made their sociopolitical decision to withhold their legitimacy. The construed images their negative actions created (that OSEG was uncaring about the Glebe community) were then reflected back to OSEG, who recognized that an identity gap existed.

To address this, OSEG's focused on pragmatic legitimacy-seeking activities aligned with a specific audience, in this case stakeholders within the Glebe community. These activities included hosting town halls to communicate and address the concerns of the community, keeping the community abreast of the stadium construction developments through their website and social media, and meeting one-on-one with government stakeholders to provide updates on their legitimacy-seeking activities with the Glebe community.

In this situation, as the example occurred before the time of the study, it is unknown if the identity gap existed due to differences in external stakeholders' and OSEG's perceptions of legitimacy, which would require an identity change, forming it into what the interviews revealed during the time of the study, or if the identity gap occurred because of how OSEG expressed its identity through image, resulting in a disconnect in the image co-creation process regarding how OSEG's image was perceived. In this case, OSEG would not require a change in identity but a change in how its image was perceived.

Regardless, OSEG's legitimacy-seeking attempts to reduce the identity gap in a co-creational image process were successful, as the organization is currently in a position of actional legitimacy in which there are no legitimacy issues caused by identity gaps which threaten the existence of the organization.

As transformation is one of the great themes associated with organizational life (Nag et al., 2007), and social reality is a dynamic process (Bentele, 1997), even during times of greater organizational stability, when no significant identity gaps existed, such as during the course of the data collection for this study as discussed in the study one

findings summary on page 184, subtle changes to OSEG's identity or perceptions of its identity were required to maintain image co-creation and prevent identity gaps. For example, as revealed in the external interviews, the Fury identity label of "pro-team" subtly shifted in meaning at the start of the franchise from meaning professional soccer at a high level of competition with an "aggressive, fast-paced, and relentless style of play," as identified in the Fury's individual team brand guide, to organizational professionalism and sustainability, as understood by the OSEG employees.

Summary of Study One Discussion

Previously, Scott and Lane (2000) argued that identity was no longer defined only by organization members. Gioia et al. (2014) expanded on this line of thought, suggesting that if a gap exists between how an organization believes it is perceived (construed image) and its identity, the organization will act to change its identity or its image perception. Study one sought to further move theory along its continuum by understanding why that identity gap may occur. To do this, the concept of legitimacy was introduced, a concept that forms the underpinnings of the social theory approach to PR.

Thus, the above discussion further elaborated on the research findings: that IM, viewed through a social theory PR lens, is legitimacy-seeking in nature, and image co-creation is the manifestation of organizational legitimacy-seeking by internal stakeholders and legitimacy-granting by external stakeholders. This process was visually depicted in Figure 5.2 and explained using two examples from OSEG. The examples also suggest that while OSEG employees may view image from a marketing perspective, operationally their concept of identity and image were inclusive of stakeholders beyond just customers. This suggests that despite using the term "brand image" when discussing

OSEG and its teams, the meaning behind this term is more holistic and inclusive of a stakeholder view beyond just customers.

Study Two Discussion

While the first study answered the first two research questions, the second study sought to explore the more specific, explicit effects of social media in terms of identity, legitimacy, image, and how these organizational constructs manifest through social media itself, in this case Twitter.

Legitimacy Seeking and Granting Through Image Communication Themes

The nature of the themes identified in OSEG's tweets, remained consistent with the general findings of other research in the use of Twitter by sport organizations (Abeza, 2016). For example, Abeza (2016) studied Twitter use as a relationship-management tool, revealing that updating games, promoting teams, appreciating fans, publicizing community activities, selling, and servicing fans were its primary activities. He also noted that Twitter was a place for fans to express their fanship, interact with players, and ask questions of the organization. Smith et al.'s (2012) study of Twitter use showed that updating games, cheering, encouraging, celebrating, and jeering were the dominant use of the of the platform. Other researchers described similar variations on such findings in non-crisis situations (Filo et al., 2015; Stavros et al., 2014).

In terms defined by Bitektine (2011), OSEG's expressions of identity on Twitter through image showed that the organization primarily sought legitimacy through linkage, technical, managerial, and personal attributes. Combined, these addressed 9 of the 10 legitimacy-seeking dimensions. The exception was community engagement and its focus on CSR.

However, when discussing how OSEG sought legitimacy, it is first important to understand how the image communication themes identified in the study established legitimacy. Through linkage legitimacy, OSEG attempted to link to other legitimate organizations within the community (i.e., media, celebrities, local government, and community groups), as it sought to transfer images of legitimacy of those individuals or organizations to itself. Linkage legitimacy also sought to create a sense of relational closeness and acceptance by its stakeholders on Twitter.

In seeking managerial legitimacy, OSEG sought to improve its image vis-à-vis stakeholder expectations of organizational performance both on and off the field. Technical legitimacy, on the other hand, demonstrated to stakeholders on Twitter that they were meeting service standards of those who attended games or other OSEG events at TD Place stadium. Both managerial and technical legitimacy can be thought of as a form of organizational self-promotion.

Attempts to secure personal legitimacy were communicated through images which showcased that coach, athlete, or staff conduct were not violating stakeholder expectations. This was often done by providing behind-the-scenes access to the organization which offered glimpses into staff conduct or individual personal comments that demonstrated their conduct. Consequential legitimacy-seeking activities often took the form of expressing the consequences or outcomes of OSEG's community relations programs or the positive consequences (fan enjoyment) of attending a game or OSEG event at TD Place Stadium. A summary of how OSEG's communication themes sought different types of legitimacy is articulated in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1

How Image Communication Themes Seek Legitimacy

Image Communication Themes (Legitimacy Type)	How Establishes Legitimacy
Affiliation (Linkage)	Seeks image transfers (O'Reilly & Séguin, 2013; Shank & Lyberger, 2014). Image transfers enhanced when matched at functional basis (Gwinner, & Eaton, 1999; Prendergast, Paliwal, & Mazodier, 2016). Affiliating with celebrities or athletes has been linked to positive evaluations (Clemente, Dolansky, Mantonakis, & White 2014), attitudes (Till, Stanley, & Priluck 2008), and word-of-mouth (Bush, Martin, & Bush, 2004) toward a product or organization Mass media has been shown to assist in the manufacture of consent and the shaping of public opinion (Clavier & El Ghaoui, 2009), making mainstream media a crucial tool for legitimizing ideas (Freedman, 2015). Associating with legitimate governments increases legitimacy perceptions (Jindong, 2011). Legitimate governments display trustworthiness and procedural justice, denoted as the popular acceptance of government officials' right to govern (Levi, Sacks, & Tyler, 2009).
Competence / Success (Personal, Technical, Managerial)	Subjective evaluations of an organization's competencies have been found to be an excellent predictor of its subsequent survival and growth (Reimann, 1982), trust (Bryson, Crosby, & Stone, 2015), and performance and sense of goodwill (Chen & Graddy, 2010). The communicating of specific organizational attributes, such as technical competence, can construct positive aggregate images of their collective character (Lamertz et al., 2005) and success, resulting in better access to resources (Diez-Martin, Prado-Roman, & Blanco-Gonzalez, 2013).

Community Engagement (Consequential, Linkage)	Engagement in communities by an organization has been linked to an enhanced corporate image (Fombrun & Shanley, 1990; Quazi & O'Brien, 2000) and allow sport organizations to address pressures from key stakeholders (Babiak, 2010; Babiak & Trendafilova, 2011; Babiak & Wolfe, 2009) as well as the community at large (Babiak & Trendafilova, 2011; Heinze et al., 2014). It can help build social capital through the creation of social interaction ties, assisting in building a shared vision and trust among company employees and their community of stakeholders (Sun & Shang, 2014). Legitimacy of a sport organization is perceived as “doing the right thing” (Lock et al., 2015) and being a community “social anchor” (Alonso & O'Shea, 2012).
Direct Engagement (Linkage)	Engaging with stakeholders enhances organizational interests and alignments with stakeholders (Mitchell et al., 1997) and organizational legitimacy within that stakeholder group (Bitektine, 2011; Greenwood, 2007). It also attempts to legitimize by creating an increase in the perceived level of relational closeness (parasocial activity [Fedrick et al., 2012]) as well as acceptance of the message (Etter et al., 2017).
Game or Event Experience (Linkage, Consequential, Technical)	Stadium atmosphere and club success are the dominant factors in team attractiveness (Koenigstorfer, Groeppel-Kline, & Kunkel, 2010). The ability to successfully stage a game above normative expectations aligns with Ruef and Scott's (1998) definition of technical legitimacy.
Gratitude/Fan Recognition (Linkage)	Appreciation provides a tangible connection between OSEG and its fans, reinforcing the team as a component of the fan's social identity (Brown, 2000; Coombs & Osborne, 2012; Sanderson, 2013). Stakeholders' appreciation is linked to the legitimacy-building concept of moving toward institutionalization (Franck, 1992; Miller, 2013; Schott, 1993).
Humanizing the Organization (Technical, Managerial, Personal)	Attempts to become more legitimate by creating an increase in the perceived level of relational closeness (parasocial activity [Fedrick et al., 2012]) and social identity (Brown, 2000; Coombs & Osborne, 2012; Sanderson, 2013).
Informational (Technical)	Mixed correlation between legitimacy and transparency (Curtin & Meijer, 2006; Smythe & Smith, 2006). Legitimacy is gained only when information is disclosed regarding issues “material” to stakeholders (Frost & Beck, 2015).

Social Validation (Linkage)	Acceptance of tweets from citizens in social media and in a fan's perceived social group are sources of legitimacy (Etter et al., 2017; Sanderson, 2013).
Promoting / Information Sharing (Technical, Managerial)	Suchman (1995) described organizational self-promotion as a strategy for maintaining legitimacy or "buttressing" legitimacy already acquired.

OSEG's expressions of identity through image sought consequential legitimacy benefits that allowed OSEG to address pressures from key stakeholders (Babiak, 2010; Babiak & Trendafilova, 2011; Babiak & Wolfe, 2009) by being perceived as having "done the right thing" (Lock et al., 2015, p. 20). The prevalence of technical, managerial, personal, and linkage legitimacy typologies associated with OSEG contrasted with the findings of Lock et al.'s (2015) assessment of a community sport organization in Australia, where consequential and procedural legitimacy types were the most common.

This finding indicated the importance of context when discussing a social construct, such as image co-creation based on legitimacy, a construct in which an organization's actions can be associated with different benefits or hazards for different stakeholders (Biketine, 2011; Lock et al., 2015).

For example, in Lock's study of a non-profit sport organization in Australia, the Manly United Football (soccer) Club, there was strong emphasis on consequential and procedural legitimacy. Consequential legitimacy was sought to show how the organization provided a benefit to the community in developing local players in alignment with socially construed expectations. Procedural legitimacy was used to demonstrate shared values with the community through the fairness and trailing procedures in the selection of players for different team levels (Locket et al., 2015).

This is contrasted with a for-profit organization such as OSEG. Its legitimacy-seeking actions through Twitter focused on linkage, technical, managerial, and personal legitimacy. As illustrated in Table 5.1, these actions instead centred on organizational promotion and demonstrations of community involvement.

Due the high volume of Twitter communication by OSEG seeking elements of technical, managerial, personal, and linkage legitimacy in its co-creational IM efforts, these aspects of legitimacy are reviewed in greater detail.

Technical/Managerial/Personal Legitimacy

These legitimacy types were linked together due to their interrelationships and appearances together in 3 of 10 image communication themes (competence/success, humanizing the organization, promotion/information sharing) and were present in 65.4% of OSEG's tweets and retweets. When making legitimacy judgments through these three lenses, OSEG's Twitter community evaluated the organization relative to their normative expectations (Ruef & Scott, 1998).

In the case of competence/success and promotional/information communication themes, such evaluations were observed primarily based on win-loss record, player performance, qualifications of coaches, competition faced, and stadium atmosphere. Each of these evaluations included elements of the three legitimacy types. Technical legitimacy was achieved through demonstrations of core technologies and services, relating to the provision of athletic therapy, training facilities, coaching equipment for analysis, and positive in-game stadium experience.

Managerial legitimacy was demonstrated through the competent use and application of those technologies. Coaches and the general manager demonstrated

managerial legitimacy through the communication of their game preparation and visible coaching images. General managers provided the required personnel (athletes and support staff) that fans evaluated. Finally, personal legitimacy was sought through athletes, who, along with the coaches and general manager, were the principal sources of personal legitimacy assessments, as they were the leaders and ambassadors of the team to the fans and community at large.

These combined evaluations were evidenced in the following tweet response:

“@Mackiegol: @OttawaFuryFC @FCEdmonton Now enough is enough. Product is appalling. Worst attack. Worst defense. Either back @pauldalglish or let him go.” In this tweet, the author expressed their judgment that Fury players did not play effectively due to their failing to meet on-field performance expectations (personal legitimacy), which might partly derive from their training and coaching (managerial and technical legitimacy). Tweets humanizing the organization allowed an insider look into practices and team management, which demonstrated technical and managerial legitimacy. It also allowed insights into player personalities (personal legitimacy).

Community outreach initiatives demonstrated personal and managerial legitimacy through the administration of the community initiatives and player interactions.

Within these three legitimacy typologies, the image theme of promotional/information sharing was unequivocally established as the most common use of Twitter by OSEG. It accounted for 50.8% of their Twitter activity. This finding indicated that OSEG primarily expressed its identity through image communication activities directly related to the on-field element of their teams and potentially that it represented a highly cost-effective option for a team on a budget. Thus, in Twitter,

technical, managerial, and personal legitimacy were also the most common legitimacy dimensions on which judgment-granting decisions by the online community were made.

Through this image expression, OSEG denoted a marketing viewpoint that Twitter was primarily used for team brand management. This finding was consistent with Agyemang and Williams's (2013) belief that image, impression management, and brand management were equivalent in professional sport. However, this finding also uncovered a potential weakness of such an outlook. If there was no strong image within the broader context of OSEG beyond its teams, manifested as projected identity, it would be more difficult to manage image, as their perspective-driven approach would be unavailable. This broader context is important to organizational image and PR studies because it differentiates them from branding studies (Lock et al., 2015; Pratt, 2013) and allows OSEG teams to more easily communicate their aforementioned "credibility element."

OSEG's promotional/information image communication theme primarily included positive team information-distributing activities, which both satisfied existing self-identified fans' desires for information about their team and raised awareness of the team itself to those who were not actively engaged (Kwak et al., 2010; O'Reilly & Séguin, 2013). Suchman (1995) described such organizational self-promotion as a strategy for maintaining legitimacy or "buttressing" legitimacy already acquired. Therefore, such legitimacy-seeking behaviour might not be as effective for OSEG as other legitimacy-seeking activities due to the relative youth of two of their teams, the RedBlacks and the Fury, both of whom just completed their third seasons and might not yet have established a strong sense of legitimacy in the Ottawa community.

When seeking legitimacy through promotion, OSEG needed to be cognizant of egregious self-aggrandizing. Ashford and Gibbs (1990) articulated the “self-promoter’s paradox” (p. 20), wherein too much self-promotion can jeopardize legitimacy, an effect opposite of that intended. Sung and Kim (2014) noted this phenomenon in a non-sport social media context when they determined that the organization was viewed more favourably when it disseminated information not associated with specific self-promotion.

However, the findings of the present study contrasted those assertions, as promotional/information sharing tweets generally garnered positive legitimacy judgments, as indicated through the number of positive responses (42.2%, ranked fifth) versus negative responses (5.2%, ranked fourth) and a fifth-ranked retweet rate of 8.5. This general absence of identity gaps despite the high presence of promotional/information sharing tweets among the OSEG accounts suggested that the “self-promoter’s paradox” might not be as relevant in a professional team sport environment as in other industries. This finding might be explained by the nature of the sport product, which constantly generates news through regular on-field activity. The distribution of that activity information via Twitter satisfied existing self-identified fans’ need for information about their team (Kwak et al., 2010; Luchman et al., 2014; Stavros et al., 2014) and mutually reinforced fans’ social relationship with a team, serving as evidence of organizational transparency. In fact, such use of Twitter appeared to have provided an opportunity for simultaneous IM and brand promotion through customer-serving communications. Thus, image and brand management were coincidental forms of customer service, as OSEG’s furnishing of evidence of its technical legitimacy also met fans’ demand for team information.

When looking at tweet themes containing technical, personal, and managerial legitimacy in a holistic manner, these tweets represented OSEG's ability to provide a stable and consistent entertainment product for their fans and the city. This finding was evidenced when reviewing the content of the tweets, which emphasized team successes and exciting game experiences. The low percentage of negative responses indicated that the Ottawa community accepted this image, expecting their teams to be competitive and well-run both on and off the field compared to their normative expectations.

Linkage Legitimacy

Linkage legitimacy was the other significant legitimacy type by which OSEG was judged on Twitter. Judgment scrutiny based on linkage was found in five image communication themes: affiliation, direct engagement, game or event experience, gratitude/fan recognition, and social validation. These accounted for 35.1% of OSEG tweets and retweets. Through sending tweets that linked OSEG with other legitimizing actors in society, such as affiliations with the local municipal government, leagues and teams, media, community organizations, schools, and the fans themselves, the organization pursued positive associations with what Etter et al. (2017) termed sources of legitimacy. The sources of legitimacy they identified included media, accreditation bodies, surveys, and citizens in social media. Similarly, Bitektine and Haack (2015) discussed media, government, the judicial system, and (in some cases) trade associations as judgment-validation institutions that influence sociopolitical decision-making regarding legitimacy.

In the context of this study, accreditation bodies (Etter et al., 2017) and judicial or trade associations (Bitektine & Haack, 2015) would be considered the different leagues

OSEG's teams compete within, as they regulate the entry of a team and its conditions for remaining within their league. They are also the judiciary body concerning league infractions for the team and its players. By communicating linkages to external sources of legitimacy, OSEG demonstrated to its Twitter followers important legitimacy-validating clues that guided favourable social judgments toward the organization, which would aid them in seeking legitimacy from the community. Figures 4.4 and 4.5 illustrate that OSEG's image communications that are evaluated by linkage legitimacy are effective, grounded on the low volume of negative responses. However, as explained later in the chapter, it is important to note that social judgment inhibiting factors from the aforementioned judgment-validation institutions could limit dialogic communication (Bitektine & Haack, 2015).

Dialogue on Twitter

Little dialogue took place on OSEG-related Twitter accounts. On average, an organization tweet or retweet generated a response 27.8% of the time. The low response to organization-generated communication was congruent with other social media research that also reveals under-utilization of social media opportunities for dialogic engagement (e.g., Kent & Taylor, 2016; Linville et al., 2012). In some respects, this finding was surprising in a sport context due to the highly socially identified nature of social media followers that sport engenders (Frederick et al., 2012; Kwak et al., 2010; Stavros et al., 2014). However, followers, as indicated through their low negative sentimental responses (3.5%), did not express an expectation that the organization would consistently respond to comments and questions; instead, they appeared content to simply express their fanship in a public forum (Hogan, 2010; Stavros et al., 2014). Since the study did not

measure the level of engagement of individual Twitter users, the question of whether this might also have indicated low engagement levels is beyond the scope of this discussion.

The observed exception to this finding included specific, personal, and context-specific questions or complaints. For questions or complaints that might reflect on a larger population, OSEG's leaders replied publicly to address the broader audience. For complaints where OSEG decided an individually tailored response was required, they asked the follower to direct message them or contact them directly to move the conversation out of Twitter's public forum.

The finding that dialogic communication with OSEG on Twitter was not an inherent expectation of followers did not appear to affect their relationship with the organization or its teams. This contrasted with Avidar's (2013) findings in the context of Israeli business and non-profit associations. She noted that responsiveness and the encouragement of user engagement were pivotal to building relationships online between the organization and its publics.

The bridge between these two findings might be found in the motivation for social media usage in a professional sport context. For example, in one study, fans reported that the factors underscoring their motivation for social media use included passion for the sport and team, esteem, and the perception that they gained a sense of camaraderie through social media participation (Stavros et al., 2014). In another study, it was determined that users were more likely to access sport Twitter sites to satisfy information-seeking purposes or entertainment compared to purposes of fanship, despite fanship being integral to relationship-building (Witkemper et al., 2012). These findings showed that OSEG was correct in using Twitter primarily in a marketing context, as

indicated by the size of its promotional/information sharing theme. It also indicated that OSEG's Twitter users human-mediated their information selection, and the lack of dialogue was not due to cognitive information overload (Barnett et al., 2018; Pentina & Tarafdar, 2014)

Social Judgment Inhibiting Factors

Study findings indicated 3.5% of Twitter responses contained a negative sentiment, compared to 41.7 % positive. While these findings suggested that OSEG's image was accepted, social judgment inhibiting factors must also be considered in the image co-creation process, such as the presence of conformity pressures from social validation institutions, including media, regulators, league, government, the legal system, and the Twitter community itself (Bitektine & Haack, 2015; Etter et al., 2017). As noted in the literature review on page 63, during times of institutional stability, this conformity pressure manifests as the burden felt by external stakeholders, who make different independent sociopolitical evaluation judgments to not express those judgements publicly.

This is due to a sense of a social pressure to suppress opinions if they differ from what are perceived as the accepted social norms that have already been recognized by the aforementioned social validation institutions (Centola, Willer, & Macy, 2005; Zhu & Westphal, 2011). This is especially important in an online sport setting, where fans who highly identify with a team use Twitter to express themselves and their team affiliation (Gibbs et al., 2014). Thus, sports organizations such as OSEG need to be aware that during times of organizational stability, or actional legitimacy, the appearance of mutual legitimacy understanding and acceptance on Twitter through retweets and responses may

mask a level of organizational dissatisfaction by minorities in the Twitter community.

While Twitter can be a strong indicator of co-creational image acceptance, it should not be monitored in isolation. PR practitioners are still required to holistically monitor their organizational environment beyond social media platforms to evaluate their legitimacy behaviour.

Summary of Study Two Discussion

As found in study one, OSEG's expressions of identity on Twitter through image communication themes was part of its legitimacy-seeking behaviour. They were public actions upon which OSEG wished stakeholders to evaluate them. OSEG expressed their identity online through image-communication themes that sought legitimacy along five legitimacy typologies as outlined in Table 4.11 (linkage, managerial, technical, personal, and consequential). The use of multiple legitimacy typologies in Twitter to seek legitimacy allowed the organization to become legitimate to more stakeholders (Deephouse & Suchman, 2008).

In terms of image co-creation, these legitimacy observations can be linked to recent image and identity studies which suggest that, for organizations to survive in an increasingly complex communicative environment, they must maintain a strong but flexible public-centered organizational image and identity that can adapt to stakeholder expectations while maintaining core values (Gioia et al., 2013; Sha, 2009). To relate this to a social theory view of PR in image management, the organization seeks legitimacy through a public-centred organizational focus. Due to the authenticity required of identity in a social media world, the organization's expressions of identity through image must be clear while maintaining adaptability to allow legitimacy-seeking across multiple

typologies, letting the organization maximize its ability to receive positive sociopolitical judgments from the perceptions of its images, which require judgments from external stakeholders (legitimacy dimensions).

Within Twitter, a positive judgment may result in a positive response, a retweet, or simple inaction (acceptance of the tweet). A negative response to a tweet indicates that the image communication theme expressed by the organization was viewed negatively, and legitimacy was not granted. These expressions provide the information needed for the organization to assess its construed image (how we think they see us) and ascertain if an identity gap, or lack of legitimacy understanding, exists.

However, a consideration when discussing mutual legitimacy understanding in relation to the co-creational IM process, particularly on Twitter, was the dearth of dialogue evidenced. This could hinder the relationship-building process required to reach a state of co-creational understanding of legitimacy and might prejudice legitimacy equilibrium. This could make the perception of image co-creation attainment appear stronger than it really is. If social judgment-inhibiting factors are strong on the organizational Twitter account, the perceived need for individual Twitter users to conform to the greater Twitter community may influence some members of the Twitter community to not express dissenting opinions if they feel others in the community have already accepted an image as legitimate. This conformity influence also extends to the organization's accreditation body. In OSEG's case, the league and its teams are seen as legitimate by society. If they express their approval of OSEG's teams by suggesting that the team continues to be in good standing within the league, they may influence conformity among the greater Twitter community. A final suppression force may be the

position of the media on an issue related to the team, as the media are perceived as experts on the subject matter or representative of the larger social perspective. This illustrates that PR practitioners should not rely on any single platform or stakeholder group when assessing an organization's image legitimacy acceptance.

In short, image affiliations with more established organizations built trust, reinforced an image and identity of community involvement, and created conformity pressure. This encouraged and/or legitimized expressions of fan support while inhibiting dissenting opinions. Images of organizational promotion and demonstrations of community involvement sought technical, managerial, or personal legitimacy. Such images were the most frequent on OSEG's Twitter account, indicating the potential of the "self-promoter's paradox." However, this paradox was not present in any of OSEG's eight Twitter feeds, indicating that sport organizations have a high capacity to express self-promotion.

CHAPTER 6: INTEGRATION OF STUDY DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSION

This study used four research questions to explore how the emergence of social media technology and its use contributes to the development of organizational identity, organizational image, and organizational legitimacy in a social media world. As noted in the literature review, the vast majority of existing research, particularly related to the use of social media, has focused on the general use of the digital platform (e.g., Brodie, Hollebeek, Juric, & Ilic, 2011; Gioia et al., 2013, 2014; Kwak et al., 2010; Meikle & Young, 2011; Rowe & Hutchins, 2014; Stavros et al., 2014; Wakefield & Hancock, 2016; Waters et al., 2011; Yoshida, Gordon, Nakazawa, & Biscaia, 2014) and noted the underutilization of social media in general at the organizational level (Brennan & Croft, 2012; Linville et al., 2012; Lovejoy et al., 2012; Luchman, Bergstrom, & Krulikowski 2014; Sun & Shang, 2014; Watkins & Lewis, 2014).

Accordingly, the purpose of this qualitative embedded exploratory case study was to explore the emergence of social media technology and how its use has contributed to the development of organizational identity, organizational image, and organizational legitimacy in the specific context of sport using a social theory approach to PR. Nekmat et al. (2014) observed that future considerations in PR IM should seek to fill the scholarly gap formed by the lack of empirical approaches, as “there is a growing need for public relations theory that deals specifically with image management” (p. 286). Perhaps because IM has been an understudied area of PR scholarship (Nekmat et al., 2014), study results indicate that there is confusion of PR’s role in organizational IM.

Building and Refining a Co-Creational Image-Based Social Approach to Sport PR

The study's view on theory corresponded with that of Weick (1995a, 1995b) and Mintzberg (2005), who argued that most theories are approximate theories and that theory is a continuum whose development starts with speculations and ends with explanations and models. Both the PR and sport management fields have been dominated by scholarship that has balanced both professional-based and theory-oriented directions (Sisco et al., 2011; Zhang, 2015). However, as illustrated by some researchers contesting the dominant, functional-based excellence framework in the PR field (Edwards, 2012; Gower, 2006), there was a need to develop skills and theories with alternative ways of understanding the complex social realities of today's organizations (Storberg-Walker & Chermack, 2007). In the applied disciplines of sport management and PR, however, it cannot be forgotten that practitioners also need and use theory. As Mintzberg (2005) stated,

Theory is a rather dirty word in some managerial quarters. That is rather curious because all of us, managers especially, can no more get along without theories than libraries can get along without catalogs and for the same reason, theories help us make sense of incoming information. (p. 249)

Thus, one could assert that all managers operate under some form of theory. It might be a theory developed through their own individual experience, but it is a form of theory nonetheless. Argyris and Schön (1996) called this "theory-in-use" (p. 20).

From this perspective, this research sought to contribute to identity, image, legitimacy, PR, and sport PR through a multi-paradigmatic conceptualization of co-

creational IM in the evolving social media world, driven by legitimacy-seeking and granting activities. It pursued an understanding of sport PR's role in IM and culminated in adapting and extending Gioia et al's 2014 process model of identity-image interdependence (Figure 6.1) and the creation of a process-based co-creational IM framework within Twitter in the context of a sport conglomerate during times of actional legitimacy (Figure 6.2).

Lynham's (2002) general method of theory-building research in applied disciplines offered a simple visual model of the theory-building research process and was used to guide the contributions of this research (Appendix T). Her model was chosen to help structure the study's contribution, as PR is an applied science and management discipline in communications theory (Pieczka & L'Etang, 2006). Lynham's approach also lends itself to case study research, as it includes the contextual application required in applied theory-building (Dooley, 2002). Finally, Lynham (2002) noted that theory-building was a continuous process, or growth cycle, that requires continuous refinement and development. This aligned with the dissertation's approach, which sought to augment previous research in PR to move scholarship, concurring with Mintzberg (2005) and Weick's (1995 a, 1995b) theory continuum.

Conceptual Development

Conceptual development requires the formulation of ideas in a way that depicts the current, best, most informed understanding and explanation of the phenomenon, issue, or problem in the relevant world context (Dubin, 1978; Lynham, 2000). Conceptual development is considered the first step toward building theory (Storberg-Walker, 2007) and results in an informed conceptual framework (Lynham, 2002).

The conceptual development for this study was informed from the research's literature review, which concluded that a complex interrelationship exists between, PR, organizational legitimacy, organizational image, and organizational identity, particularly as fans seek authenticity and transparency in the relationships being established (Pronschinske et al., 2012). From this finding, it was established that for a sport organization to achieve legitimacy, the goal of a social theory approach to PR, an organization was required to cultivate images in an ongoing co-creational communication process.

In this process, the organization strove to obtain a shared meaning of image between the identity concept of internal stakeholders, who projected desirable images of their identity, and the acceptance or potential altering of those images by key external stakeholders through organizational dialogue. The acceptance or rejection of organizational image was a result of stakeholders' cognitive-attitudinal disposition toward the organization, as measured through their actions after making legitimacy-granting judgments.

Operationalization

In this phase, the research sought to show connections among its conception and practice, to be further examined in a real-world context (Lynham, 2002). This was done through the development of four research questions that would provide guidance to explore the conceptual schema underlying the investigation through an exploratory embedded single case study design. This schema suggested that if IM was viewed through a social theory PR lens, in which legitimacy-seeking and granting activities are the core of the discipline (Ihlen & Verhoeven, 2012; Waeraas, 2009), then legitimacy is a

critical element whose role in organizational image and identity constructs in a social media world requires further exploration.

This was done through the research questions:

RQ1. How do organizational identity, organizational image influence, and organizational legitimacy interact internally in a sport organization in the social media world?

RQ2. How does the understanding of legitimacy from internal and external stakeholders interact in the co-creation of organizational image in the sport organization in a social media world?

RQ3: How does the usage of social media explicitly affect the creation of organizational identity, organizational image, and organizational legitimacy in a sport organization?

RQ4: How does social media usage directly affect the co-creation of organizational image for a sport organization?

The literature review demonstrated a need to study the complex interrelationship between identity, image, and legitimacy as aspects of an organization's PR image-building activities. This is especially true in an online environment where stakeholders are bombarded with large amounts of information and rely on legitimacy-based heuristic scrutinizations regarding an organization's actions.

Confirmation or Disconfirmation

While this phase of Lynham's (2012) theory-building model in applied disciplines has a distinct quantitative leaning, for the purposes of this research it can thought of as the exploratory analysis required to aid in the development of a theoretical model, as it is not in the nature of qualitative research to test propositions or even to make hypotheses. Instead, the study's qualitative research questions were answered through the development of conceptual or theoretical constructs that emerged from the study.

Specifically, the research sought to explore the relationship between identity, image, and legitimacy in the social media world using a social theory PR approach. This was done not to confirm or disconfirm theory, as Lynham (2012) suggested, but to further explore and support theory to move it along its continuum toward complete explanatory models (Mintzberg, 2005). This required two phases within the study. In the first study, the first two research questions sought to explore the relationship between organizational identity and organizational image in terms of legitimacy. The second study explored the ways in which those perceptions of legitimacy were expressed, accepted, and empirically manifested in an online environment through Twitter.

The first study involved data collection through interview and document analysis. It sought to understand the connections among the focal organization's concepts of identity, image, and legitimacy at the macro-level. Results demonstrated a close relationship between identity, image, and legitimacy. Transparency and communication arose as key elements of identity and legitimacy beliefs within the case context.

Previous research (e.g. Gioia et al., 2014; Scott & Lane, 2000) argued that identity was no longer defined only by organization members. The first phase of the research

sought to contribute to this understanding by introducing the concept of legitimacy-seeking and granting to the IM process, a concept that forms the underpinnings of a social theory approach to PR (Ihlen & Verhoeven, 2012; Waeraas, 2009). When viewed through such a lens, findings indicated that IM, from an organizational perspective, could indeed be considered legitimacy-seeking in nature, and image co-creation is the manifestation of organizational legitimacy-seeking by internal stakeholders and legitimacy-granting by external stakeholders.

The second phase of the study sought to explore the more specific, explicit effects of social media in terms of identity, legitimacy, image, and how these organizational constructs manifested in image co-creation through IM on Twitter. In this co-creational IM process, organizations sought legitimacy through communication on Twitter, discernible through image communication themes upon which it wished its legitimacy to be evaluated (legitimacy dimensions [Bitekine, 2011; Lock et al., 2015]).

However, while context changes how and to what extent an organization may seek legitimacy through image communication themes on Twitter, those image communication themes can be placed within the legitimacy-informing typologies established by Lock et al. (2015, Appendix F). Findings found that often an organization can seek more than one type of legitimacy typology within a tweet. This is a beneficial practice, as according to Deephouse and Suchman (2008), it allows an organization to become more legitimate to more stakeholders.

In a professional sport context, image affiliations with more established organizations sought linkage legitimacy that built trust and reinforced an image of community involvement, especially linkages to judgment validation institutions.

According to Bitektine and Haack (2015) and Etter et al., (2017) linkages to judgement validation institutions would likely create some level of conformity pressures for individuals within the Twitter community. This encouraged and/or legitimized expressions of fan support while inhibiting dissenting opinions. It may also contribute to Twitter's failure to reach its full dialogic potential (e.g. Belot et al., 2016; Kent & Taylor, 2016; Linville et al., 2012; Lovejoy et al., 2012; Luchman, Bergstrom, & Krulikowski 2014; Sun & Shang, 2014; Watkins & Lewis, 2014).

The study revealed that images of organizational promotion and demonstrations of community involvement sought technical, managerial, or personal legitimacy. These tweets represented an aspect of OSEG's identity that it wished to be judged on: an ability to provide a stable and consistent entertainment product for the city and its fans.

Positive sociopolitical judgments from the perceptions of its image communications on Twitter from external stakeholders were measured by positive or negative responses to tweets and retweets. This provided the data required to assess an organization's construed image (how we think they see us) and see if an identity gap, or lack of legitimacy understanding, existed.

Application

After developing theoretical insights, the next step is to review how the knowledge gained may be put into practice (Lynham, 2002). Findings of both studies indicated a strong marketing paradigm in the understanding of identity, image, and legitimacy. In the first study, this was evidenced by OSEG employees' view of the outward expressions of their team's image as strongly tied to brand management (Agyemang & Williams, 2013). In the second study, this finding was demonstrated

through more than half (50.9%) of OSEG's tweets being promotional/information sharing in nature.

In practice, the indication was that in a professional sport environment, organizational image was viewed primarily as a marketing construct. Such a view aligns with both an integrated marketing approach (Black, 2013; Schultz, Patti, & Kitchen, 2013) and a corporate identity approach to the PR discipline. In integrated marketing communications theory, PR is viewed as a substructure of marketing, while corporate identity is a concept that emerged primarily from marketing studies, which views corporate communications as integrated across all aspects of the corporation to optimize communication impact and helps the organization to stand out from others (e.g., van Riel & Balmer 1997; Balmer & Grayson, 2003).

Such scholars see PR as working in tandem with (and intractable from) marketing and advertising to develop a product image and affect public or consumer behaviour in a communication campaign (Hutton, 1996; Schultz et al., 2013). An example of this in a sport context can be seen in Pratt's 2013 study of NCAA athletic departments; she found that new administrative roles integrate multiple functions, and new media is blurring the lines between marketing, media relations, fundraising, and journalism. In fact, Pratt's study revealed that NCAA athletic directors did not necessarily separate PR from other disciplines, such as marketing.

Ha and Ferguson (2015) suggested that as the role of PR becomes more diverse and important, the integration of PR and marketing will increase. In their study of South Korean PR and marketing practitioners, they noted that this integration would not be without conflict, as both disciplines placed different values on the PR role. These authors

concluded that the two disciplines classified the PR function into three perceived categories. First was the public good function, encompassing community relations and social responsibility. This was viewed as more important to PR practitioners. The pragmatic function of PR, comprised of sales promotion, persuasion, and information distribution, was most valued by marketing and least valued by PR. The third function, image, which consisted of media relations, reputation, and issue management, was seen as of primary importance to PR practitioners but much less so to marketing.

The results of Ha and Ferguson's (2015) study showed that perception discrepancies of responsibility could create conflicts between the two disciplines. As these disciplines became more intertwined, Ha and Ferguson (2015) noted a need for PR and marketing to share appropriate roles by mutual consent and understanding, rather than by only trying to differentiate the domains between the two (Dühring, 2015). However, this mutual consent and understanding is not apparent in the current study.

Due to the marketing orientation noted in internal stakeholders' understanding of identity, image, and legitimacy, one would think that the pragmatic and image functions of PR were seemingly subsumed by a marketing perspective, as suggested by scholars of integrated marketing communications and corporate identity. However, based on the results of the interviews, this sublimation appears to have not entirely occurred. Both internal and external stakeholders struggled to articulate their understanding of IM and its relationship with PR. Some saw IM as the holistic face of the organization touching all stakeholders, a PR perspective, while others saw it as part of marketing. Some saw it as both. For example, several employees thought of different team images "bleeding" into each other or noted that they used a perspective-driven approach when thinking about

image from a team standpoint. This allowed the team image to draw on OSEG's more holistic organizational image based on context, allowing greater image perceptions than would otherwise be available.

Similarly, PR's responsibility for IM was also opaque, with some viewing PR as responsible for IM, and others viewing PR as an enacting tool of IM, merely communicating rather than shaping an organization's image. From this, it can be concluded that within the context of the case, there continues to be a conceptual blurring of what organizational IM is and who is responsible for it. The result is a continued perception discrepancy (Ha & Ferguson, 2015) regarding the domain of organizational IM between PR and marketing, resulting in a lack of mutual consent and understanding of roles within IM between the two fields. This is not surprising given the multiple understandings of PR (L'Etang, 2013b), its struggle to find its niche both academically and in practice (Fitch & L'Etang, 2017; Waters, 2013), the rise of marketing communications at the turn of the century (Schultz, Patti, & Kitchen, 2013), and the broad concept of image itself (Gioia et al., 2014).

However, without a PR-based research agenda, the roles of PR might be left to marketing to define (Smith 2013). This would run counter to Nekmat et al's (2014) assertion that, due in part to the growth of social media, there is a growing need for PR theory that deals specifically with IM. Thus, in addition to moving identity, image, and legitimacy theory along Mintzberg's (2005) and Weick's (1995a, 1995b) theory continuum, this research also sought to grow PR theory in terms of IM in an effort to assist in forming a mutual consent and understanding of the PR role in IM. This was done by viewing IM through a social theory PR perspective in which legitimacy is sought by

organizations and granted by external organizational stakeholders. Using this approach, the study built on the argument from Scott and Lane (2000), who said identity was no longer defined only by organization members, and Gioia et al. (2014), who suggested that it was in fact image that defines identity. It did this by focusing on legitimacy as the underlining driver of IM co-creation and identity change.

By adding to the literature of PR studies in IM, it is anticipated that this study will provide insights into the discussion regarding mutual consent and understanding of the PR and marketing roles within IM. Specifically, by introducing legitimacy as the key underlying driver of IM, it illustrates the need to view IM at the societal level, beyond the marketing perspective that focuses on specific products or actions of organizational identity that seek to communicate a specific image to stakeholders (Balmer & Greyser, 2003; Cornelissen, Haslam, & Balmer, 2007; Moingeon, & Soenen), often under a single name and icon (Agyemang & Williams, 2013).

From a global PR perspective, IM aligns with Moncur's (2006) and Grunig's (2013) suggestion that PR should progress towards being a management discipline, one essentially linked to organizational strategies. Through a legitimacy-seeking focus on IM, PR is not only securing the "license to operate" for an organization, but its legitimacy-seeking nature also strives to improve performance and access to resources (Bitektine & Haack, 2015), essential elements of strategy (Barney, Ketchen, & Wright, 2011). Steyn (2007) suggested that PR should encompass a greater role in strategy implementation and formulation, while Dottori, Seguin, and O'Reilly (2017) further suggested that PR practitioners and researchers should incorporate strategy itself as a core PR function. This incorporation would provide additional clarity to the roles of marketing and PR, allowing

PR to become advisers to the marketing function, as advocated by Smith (2013) and Alfonsi (2012). In this role, PR would act as the advocates of integrated stakeholders' needs (Smith, 2013), as linking a firm to its environment is a principal element of strategy (Darnall, Henriques, & Sadowsky; 2010). Such a role also would ensure that organizational behaviours and messages match stakeholders' needs, interests, and expectations, measured by stakeholder legitimacy judgments. This role would also include internal stakeholder communications, as internal stakeholders are responsible for a sport organization's self-referential concept of identity and, ergo, image. While image is commonly considered an external process, it begins internally, as with many external processes.

This would help PR carve a place in image and identity management that would be valued by practitioners of both fields and allow PR to position itself as a key management service, integrated into both organizational strategy and business function (Grunig, 2013). It would also ensure IM is viewed from a broader context, as advocated by Lock et al. (2015) and Pratt (2013), than that of integrated marketing communications approaches, which focus primarily on a product's brand. Such understandings would assist PR in finding its niche both academically and in practice. These understandings would also help PR identify and advocate a desired role that could be negotiated with marketing to achieve mutual consent and understanding.

In the case of professional sport PR, this broader context could also extend to how team ownership is viewed and how its image is managed. For example, in the English Premier League, ownership structure and perception has been shown to affect team performance (Wilson, Plumley, & Ramchandani, 2013) as well as the acceptance of

foreign owners by fans (Coombs & Osborne, 2012). The perception of professional team ownership is also important in securing government and community support for urban development projects (Mason, San, & Soebbing, 2017; Mitrook et al., 2008).

In this study, the importance of having a strong ownership image that was accepted as legitimate by society was marked by OSEG's Public-Private Partnership (PPP) over the Lansdown Live property. A PPP is a type of entity in which public and private sector organizations cooperate. However, the nature of OSEG as a PPP and the creation of Lansdowne Live on public land did not emerge as a significant theme in the results of this study. One might expect that the complex internal nature of a PPP, where control is shared between the public and private sectors, could create conflicting expectations and communication issues within the organization. If such factors were present, however, they did not emerge in the results of this study. Other examples of the need for sport organization ownership to secure a strong and accepted image for government and community support include Rogers Arena in Edmonton (Mason et al., 2017) and the Orlando Magic's Amway Center (Mitrook et al., 2008).

A final potential application for the concept of a co-creational social approach of IM to practice is to enact social media practices that further enhance dialogue on Twitter, allowing the organization to more clearly understand how its communications are being accepted. IM on Twitter is important, as it is an ideal social media platform for organizational demonstrations of self-identity (Page, 2012). Its lack of a requirement for a reciprocal binary relationship allows for online debates between organizations and society (Castello et al., 2016). However, despite these attributes, a number of scholars note that Twitter is underutilized in terms of dialogic engagement at the organizational

level (e.g., Belot et al., 2016; Brennan & Croft, 2012; Kent & Taylor, 2016; Linville et al., 2012; Lovejoy et al., 2012; Luchman, Bergstrom, & Krulikowski 2014; Sun & Shang, 2014; Watkins & Lewis, 2014).

While such practices were not required to secure legitimacy, as evidenced in the second study in this research, it does limit the benefits Twitter offers. Enhancing dialogue would allow organizations to use Twitter beyond its current, predominantly marketing-focused activities (e.g., Abeza, 2016; Below et al. 2016; Filo et al., 2015) and permit the platform to become a tool for legitimacy-monitoring and relationship-building by helping fans meet their social identity and information-consuming and sharing needs (Haugh & Watkins, 2016; Stavros et al., 2014; Sanderson; 2013). This would also allow Twitter to become an actual fan-building tool by building closer relations within the community (Witkemper et al., 2012). It can also be used further as a legitimacy-building platform by becoming more involved in social performance considerations within the wider non-sport community (Christensen et al., 2014; Cooper, 2017). Such actions would further integrate a sport organization's teams into the fabric of the community in which it operates, extending its potential fan base and license to operate while allowing it to become more of a legitimate actor to more stakeholders (Deephouse & Suchman, 2008), especially those not already socially identified with the team as fans.

The findings of study two indicated a low degree of dialogic engagement on official OSEG Twitter accounts. Kent and Taylor (2016) suggested three points to effectively use social media for dialogic communication across all social media platforms. The first was stakeholder engagement, followed by valuing others and, finally, being empathetic. To do this, they suggested acknowledging that social media sites do

not need to be for “everyone in the world” (p.67). Instead, they suggested creating smaller ad hoc discussion spaces or digital agoras to improve the ability of an organization to engage stakeholders in issues that are salient to them and respond, if required, in a timely, empathetic, and transparent manner. This would result in users feeling valued and would build stronger relationships, resulting in the accumulation of social capital within the community (Kent & Taylor, 2016; Sun & Shang, 2014). For organizations such as OSEG, study results imply that creating new Twitter accounts specifically for the purpose of community engagement, along with rebalancing the ratio of image communication tweets, would assist in Twitter not just being a communication tool but also a fan-building and enhanced legitimacy-building vehicle, as this would allow deeper interactions with their social environment.

A dialogic view of Twitter use implies that successful organizations and PR communicators need a greater depth of knowledge of key stakeholder discussions, potentially situating the organization in a broader social system of relationships that may involve risk, uncertainty, and ambiguity (Kent & Taylor, 2016). Doing so can help professional sport organizations build new fan relationships and learn more from the organization’s various Twitter followers, not just fans. This would give a broader perspective of society’s expectations of the organization, allowing it to adjust its activities to better meet public legitimacy expectations. Such actions would require the sport organization to redefine its return on investment terms to also include social capital rather than just the economics of equipment costs and person hours required (Kent & Taylor, 2016). Due to the importance of building a sense of social acceptance of the team in its community, as borne out in this study and others (e.g., Coombs & Osborne, 2012,

Mason et al., 2017), it is suggested that such a redefinition of return on investment is appropriate when planning for IM.

Ongoing Refinement and Development

Theoretical concepts need to be continually refined, developed, and adapted (Lynham, 2002). Guided by the literature review and the findings of the two studies, a new framework was advanced to move PR, image, and legitimacy studies further along the theory continuum (Mintzberg, 2005; Weick, 1995b). This development was done using results of the two study phases to link and connect concepts from Gioia et al.'s (2014) process model of identity-image independence (Appendix D), Bitektine and Haack's (2015) multilevel model of legitimacy under conditions of institutional stability, Etter et al.'s (2017) sources of organizational legitimacy, and Lock et al.'s (2015) CPOL framework.

As discussed in chapters two and five, Scott and Lane (2000) argued that identity is no longer defined only by organization members. Gioia et al. (2014) later expanded upon this line of thought, suggesting that in fact image wittingly or unwittingly drives identity. This is visually illustrated in Appendix D. Gioia and his colleagues theorized that a reflexive comparison between self-reflection and other-reflection could generate an identity change to bring identity into alignment with construed external image. Thus, identity might not always be based on a consideration of "who we are" and "who we want to be." Rather, identity change might also result from two external image considerations: "how we think they see us" and how "we want them to see us." Hence, external images (both construed and desired) become the means through which identity is eventually defined (Gioia et al., 2014). Therefore, if a gap exists between how an

organization believes it is perceived (construed image) and its identity, the organization will act to change its identity or its image perception.

In the context of this study, stakeholders included team supporter clubs, government, media, community groups, sports fans, and OSEG's general Twitter community. Within a social media world, the use of social media platforms by external stakeholders further reduces the gap between image and identity as the back-and-forth of dialogic communication cedes extraordinary power to key outsiders in influencing the essence of the organization (Gioia et al., 2014; Kent & Taylor, 2016; Taiminen et al., 2015). Literature now suggests that organizations no longer manage images in a digital environment; instead, digital images are the result of processes through direct or indirect communication with stakeholders (Gilpin, 2010). That is to say, digital PR professionals now cultivate rather than manage (Grunig, 2013) relationships in an ongoing communication process with image stakeholders.

This leads to the supposition that IM in a social media world is co-created and begs the question, how do the perceived discrepancies (or identity gaps) between self-reflection and other-reflection by Gioia develop? To help answer this, the research viewed his model through a PR social theory lens. In this approach, PR practitioners seek to gain legitimacy through IM co-creation. This introduced the concept of legitimacy-seeking and legitimacy-granting activities to the model. The first study provided evidence that viewing IM through a social theory PR lens was suitable, as findings demonstrated that internal and external stakeholders noted similar themes and attributes when describing how they perceived identity, image, and legitimacy or, more specifically, the attributes they used to label an organization as legitimate.

Thus, legitimacy-seeking behaviour could be understood as the underlying driver of IM, and it is posited that in a co-creational approach to IM, the impetus to change identity is not through identity gaps, the discrepancy between the perception of current and desired identity of an organization, as indicated by Reger et al. (1994) and Gioia et al. (2014). Rather, it is an outcome of the legitimacy-seeking process that emerges through the negotiation of organizational image with external stakeholders. Such a concept echoes Edwards and Hodges's (2011) observation that PR researchers should focus on both the processes and outcomes of PR activities from a social perspective.

Adapting the insights of a social theory PR approach to Gioia et al.'s 2014 model (Appendix D) suggests that the external triggering event or feedback in the top of his model is negative feedback of a sociopolitical judgment of a legitimacy dimension, the perception of an organizational image by stakeholders that is scrutinized in the form of social judgments made regarding the organization (Bitektine, 2011; Lock, Filo, Kunkel, & Skinner, 2015). Thus, part of the self-reflection process of this feedback requires reflection on how the organization understands legitimacy. The other-reflection is then how an organization perceives that its external stakeholders understand legitimacy based on feedback of that legitimacy dimension (the triggering event). Therefore, the perceived discrepancy between identity and image can be explained by differences in legitimacy understanding — the understanding of the socially acceptable behaviours of an organization that are consistent with societally defined values and norms (Suchman, 1995) — between the organization and its stakeholders. This process is outlined in Figure 6.1, with adaptations to Gioia's work highlighted in red.

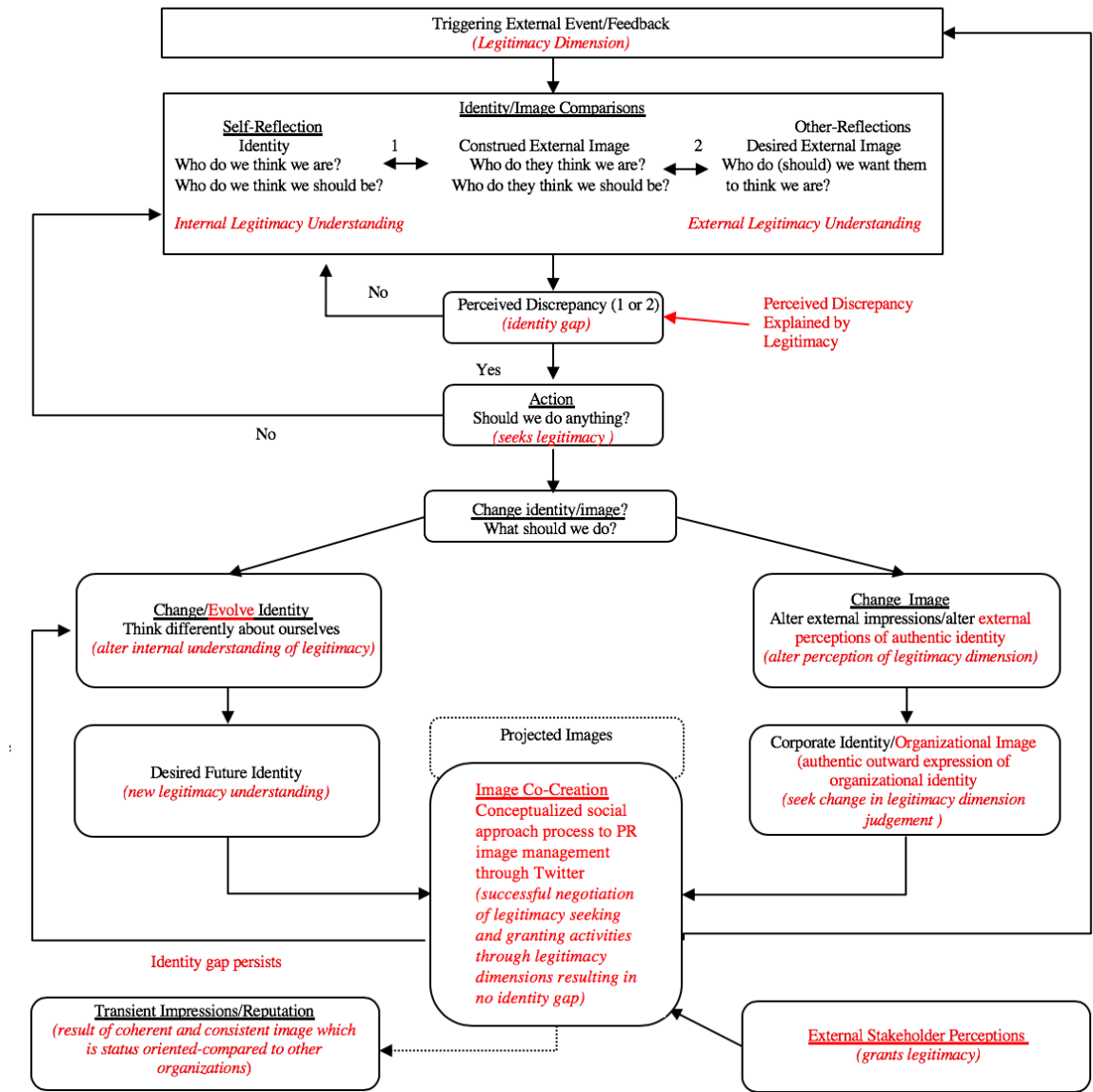


Figure 6.1. Adapted process model of identity and image interdependence from Gioia, Hamilton, and Patvardhan (2014).

If the organization decides that the discrepancy requires an action, this action will seek legitimacy to address the sociopolitical judgment of the legitimacy dimension. In Gioia et al.'s (2014) original model, the organization could either seek to change its

identity or change its image by altering external impressions of the organization. Instead, this research proposes that a change in identity is a change in the internal understanding of legitimacy. Altering external impressions implies that an organization can seek to project an image that differs from reality and that external stakeholders have only limited ability to protest or share this potential misinformation about the organization, an assertion that is being challenged in a social media world (Gilpin, 2010; Rui & Stefanone, 2013). Therefore, when an organization seeks to alter its image, this is not done by altering impressions. Rather, it is done through seeking to change how its image (the legitimacy dimension itself) is being perceived in an attempt to alter undesirable sociopolitical judgments.

Another term used by Gioia et al. (2014) is corporate identity. This term is related to impression management insofar as it is a specific projection of identity (image) that the organization wishes to communicate to constituents to gain a desired external perception, which may or may not correspond to reality (Alvesson, 1990; Balmer & Greyson, 2003; Cornelissen et al., 2007). Therefore, impression management and concepts of corporate identity and image represent one of the failings of traditional PR, which suggests that organizations can control its images to stakeholders in the new order imposed by social media.

Now an organization must project an authentic image or risk being viewed as dishonest or untrustworthy by its stakeholders through social media platforms such as Twitter. This is due to stakeholders' increased ability to interact and share information with the organization and each other (Taiminen et al., 2015). In a social media world, images are cultivated in an ongoing communication process. This leads to another

departure from Gioia et al.'s (2014) model, where image is no longer projected in a digital environment (noted by the dotted box around "projected image" in Figure 6.1). Instead, image in a digital age is a result of ongoing processes through direct or indirect communication with stakeholders (Gilpin, 2010), and IM is a co-creational process in which external stakeholders are directly engaged. Thus, an extra box explaining the role of the external stakeholders in the co-creation process was added. Therefore, in terms of a social theory approach to PR, this co-creational IM process is the negotiation of legitimacy-seeking and granting activities through legitimacy dimensions. If successful, the co-creational process results in no identity gap or perceived identity/image discrepancy.

If the organization believes that its image discrepancy (identity gap) is due to a need to further clarify or reposition its legitimacy-seeking activities as part of its image negotiation, it will pursue actions that emphasize or clarify different aspects of its authentic identity to appeal to the interests of external stakeholders (Lamertz, Carney, & Bastien, 2008; Scott & Lane, 2000; Taiminen, Luoma-aho, & Tolvanen, 2015). As Deephouse and Suchman (2008) noted, because legitimacy is assessed by multiple audiences regarding multiple activities, organizations could become more legitimate by becoming legitimate to more stakeholders. In the case of legitimacy-driven co-creational IM, this is done through the negotiation of legitimacy knowledge, meaning, and behaviour.

In terms of the case under study, this process was illustrated through the perspective-driven approach to image understanding articulated by OSEG employees. Specifically, it was expressed through employees' understanding of when to emphasize

differences between teams and when to capitalize on the positive attributes of OSEG's image based on context-specific circumstances. While each team image was viewed as distinct, there was also acknowledgment of the benefit of associations with the global OSEG organizational image. Such actions were described as the "bleeding" together of team and organizational image, providing a synergy for team image development based on overarching organizational identity. This allowed each team's image to draw on OSEG's more holistic organizational image based on context and allowed greater variance of image perceptions than would otherwise be available.

If the emphasis of the different aspects of authentic identity communicated through image is effective, the organization successfully changes how its legitimacy dimension is perceived, attaining a positive or neutral sociopolitical judgment. Thus, image is successfully co-created. However, if it is not effective, the image negotiation would have to continue and result in a new triggering event, or legitimacy dimension, that receives a negative sociopolitical judgment. This is co-creational, starting the process over again. This is shown in Figure 6.1 by the arrow leading from the co-creation box back to the triggering event or feedback box.

If the organization believes an identity gap cannot be dealt with through clarifying or emphasizing aspects of its current authentic identity, or if the same identity gap persists despite efforts to change image perception, the organization will instead seek to change its legitimacy understanding and subsequently its identity. During times of institutional legitimacy, in which the organization's very existence is threatened (Boyd, 2000), this could involve changing key elements of identity. In times of actional legitimacy, when the organization's image in terms of legitimacy may be questioned

(Boyd, 2000), identity change is more likely to take the form of changes to the meaning of its identity labels (Gioia et al., 2000). In this scenario, identity can be said to evolve (Gioia et al., 2013) as it seeks legitimacy through legitimacy-based co-creational IM negotiations.

Whether through changing its identity or through successful clarification or repositioning of its current image through image negotiation, Figure 6.1 indicates that establishing legitimacy through IM is a process subject to change over time. This is in-line with Laïfi and Josserand's (2016) assertion that legitimization is a bricolage process wherein legitimacy is not always sought en masse but also incrementally through trial and error. This process was observed when OSEG's legitimacy dimension of being community-oriented/responsible received a negative sociopolitical judgement from residents of the Glebe community that surrounded the stadium. It took the form of protests at City Hall, negative social media posts, and negative media coverage. While OSEG attempted to reduce or eliminate its identity gap by holding community hall events and being timely and transparent in communicating and addressing community concerns during stadium construction, the identity gap, while not as evident, still exists. As OSEG staff noted during interviews, managing the public perception of Lansdown Park and TD Place Stadium regarding its effects on the local community continues to be a challenge for the organization.

Gioia et al. (2014) also contend that projected images are transient impressions that, over the long term, can change into reputation, the collective knowledge about and recognition of the firm over time. However, in terms of IM in this research, while Fobrum (1996) noted that coherent and consistent images help shape reputation, it is

fundamentally different from legitimacy, as represented by the dotted line between image co-creation and reputation in Figure 6.1. This signifies that while legitimacy and reputation have many traits in common, such as cultural factors, the use of symbolic social signals, and the garnering of resources by appearing to conform to social norms (Deephouse & Suchman, 2008), the two notions are not the same. Legitimacy is fundamentally non-rival, meaning it is used in judgments against conformity to social norms and expectations, as opposed to reputation, in which judgments are rendered in relation to other organizations (Bitektine, 2011; Deephouse & Suchman, 2008). Thus, reputation must include two or more organizations, while legitimacy judgments need only include a single organization, as it need only be compared to social norms and not directly with other organizations within the same perceived industry hierarchy (Bitektine, 2011; Suchman, 1995).

While Figure 6.1, buttressed by the findings of the first research study, provided an overview of how a social theory view of PR can be used to adapt and extend Gioia et al.'s (2014) process model of identity-image interdependence, the research also sought to explore in more detail the operationalization of this process through the social media platform of Twitter. To do this, the image co-creational section of Figure 6.1 became the focus of a new framework specific to IM co-creation on Twitter in times of institutional stability, as depicted in Figure 6.2.

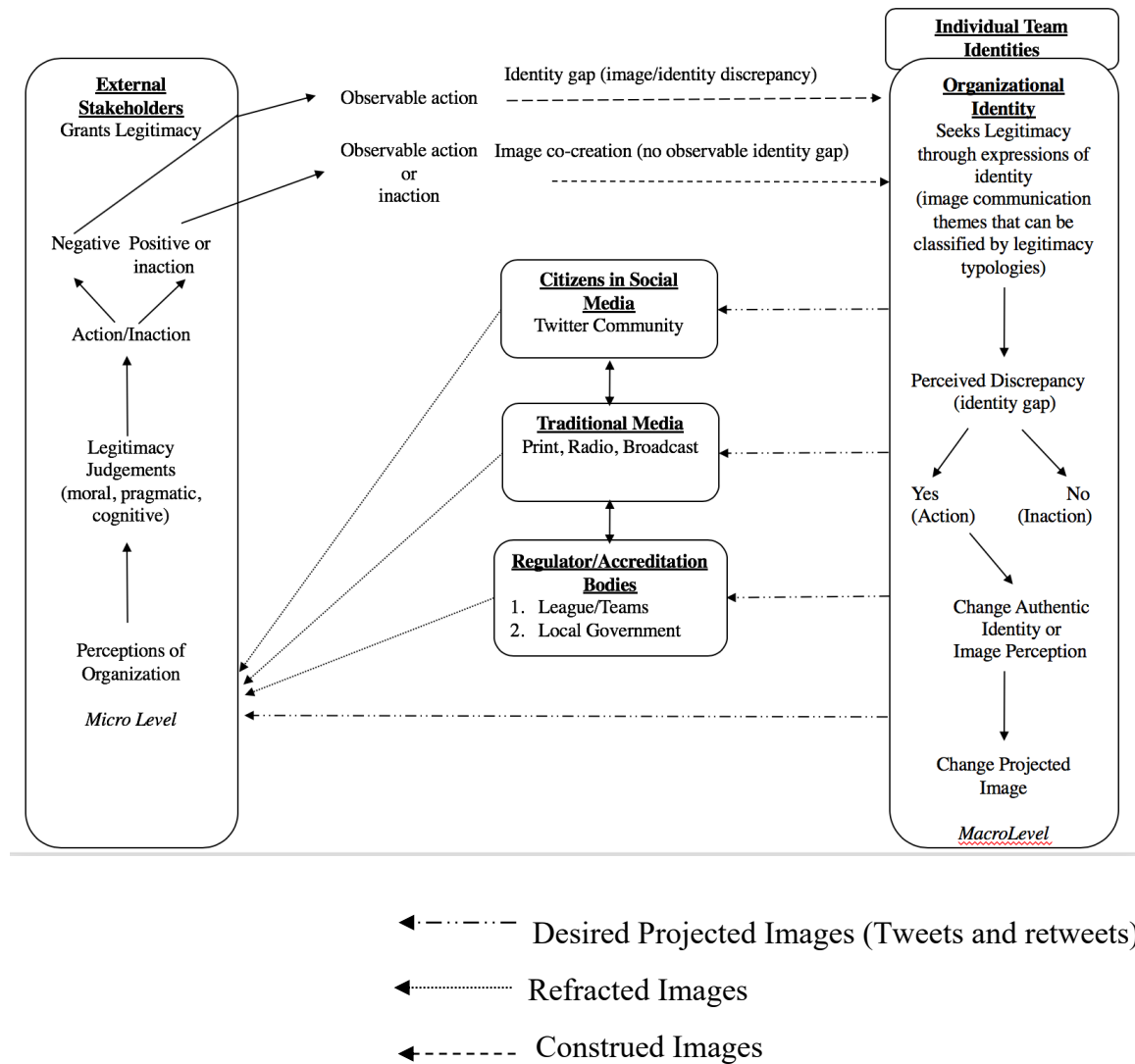


Figure 6.2. Conceptualized approach to online image management on Twitter in times of institutional stability.

The framework used a similar approach to Lock et al.'s (2015) CPOL framework insofar as it sought to uncover context-specific legitimacy-seeking dimensions that could be placed within legitimacy typologies (Appendix F). It further included elements of Bitektine and Haack's (2015) framework of a multi-level perspective of legitimacy

during times of institutional stability, wherein they argued that, through the process of institutionalization, evaluators' legitimacy judgments were subjected to social control by an institutional stability loop. In their model, the loop began at the macro level with an organization's observable properties and behaviours, which were then judged at the micro level by individuals through their perceptions. Their framework implied that expanded activity by external stakeholders in online environments required organizations to change their image management strategy from a one-way communication practice to a practice that acknowledged social media users as stakeholders who, in terms of IM, "collectively create and alter others' perceptions of organizational images" (Nekmat et al., 2014, p. 288).

Bitektine and Haack (2015) also pointed out that it was essential to distinguish between the legitimizing process in an organization under conditions of institutional change and institutional stability, or, in Boyd's (2000) terms, times of institutional and actional legitimacy. This distinction is important because it affects the legitimizing process. A key tenet of the CPOL framework, developed by Lock et al. (2015), was the importance of establishing the context through which legitimacy judgments would be made, as that would determine the legitimacy dimensions on which the organization would be scrutinized and measured.

Phase two of the study (study two) uncovered a homogeneity among OSEG's use of image communication themes on Twitter (Figure 4.2). This allowed for the Twitter feeds to be studied in aggregate. This observation is represented in Figure 6.2 through the overlapping boxes of individual team identities and organizational identity in the far-right column.

In total, the framework contains three vertical columns. In the far-right column, at the macro-level, organizations seek legitimacy through expressions of their identity, which is closely intertwined with their understanding of legitimacy, as explained in Figure 6.1. These expressions of identity are the organization's macro-level images on Twitter. Following the right column from top to bottom, if an identity gap exists, the organization may seek to change its identity or how its image is perceived by external stakeholders. If no identity gap exists, then the company does not need to change its IM behaviour on Twitter, as its image is already in a state of co-creation.

In the context of OSEG, this manifested in 10 emergent image communication themes, which sought legitimacy through one of seven legitimacy typologies. As established in the second study, data were collected during a period of time when no significant identity gaps existed. As such, within the context of the case, no changes to identity or image perceptions by external stakeholders were required. Thus, OSEG simply continued with its current mix of image communications themes as operationalized through each of its individual tweets.

An identity discrepancy (identity gap) did not arise during the course of this case study. However, if one did — and if one accepts Gioia et al.'s (2014) model of identity-image interdependence, in which image can change identity — then OSEG then would have been obligated to change its identity or the perception of its image communication themes. In terms of the process explained in Figure 6.1 and applied to the specific context of Twitter in Figure 6.2, this would require an organization to change its legitimacy-seeking activities via Twitter.

If a change of identity is required, then the organization's new understanding of legitimacy would result in new expressions of identity communication themes being expressed via Twitter or existing themes being removed. The consequence is a change in the mixture and legitimacy-seeking behaviour of the communication themes being articulated through Twitter, as it seeks moral legitimacy benefit diffusion by adapting to how external stakeholders believe they should act. If the organization decides that the identity gap did not require a change in identity, then simply changing the mix of existing communication themes expressed without adding or subtracting image communication themes would achieve the same effect. If not, then the co-creational process of Figure 6.2 begins anew.

Using the previous example of the identity gap during the stadium's construction, OSEG may have sought to reduce its identity gap by expressing new image communication themes (or removing old ones) through its tweets (identity change) or simply mixing the blend of its tweets. For example, OSEG could have increased the number of community engagement or affiliation-based tweets and reduced tweets that were promotional.

The bottom-most arrow illustrates that these image communication themes are perceived and judged to grant or withhold legitimacy by individuals at the micro-level within Twitter. These judgments are informed by the individual's sociopolitical understanding of the organization. However, these understandings may be influenced at the macro-level by what Bitektine and Haack (2015) termed judgment validation institutions, or what Etter et al. (2017) referred to as sources of organizational legitimacy. These actors are represented in the middle column.

Bitektine and Haack (2015) noted that in conditions of stability, stakeholders publicly communicating judgments on organizations were likely to have a top-down effect whereby other internal and external stakeholders felt pressured to express “the taken-for-granted set of norms that yield the same, already institutionalized judgments” (p. 55). In other words, when there is an absence of controversy (an actional legitimacy environment), external judgment validation institutions (e.g. media, regulators, or judicial systems) and organizational leadership exert a stronger judgment suppression influence. This influence is exerted through communication that tends to be “positive in tone” (Bitektine & Haack, 2015, p. 57). Etter et al. (2017) noted that the Twitter community itself became a judgment validation institution. Thus, these judgement validation institutions influence the judgments of others in the organization’s Twitter community through communicating refracted images of the organization (Rindova, 1999) and legitimacy judgment suppression (Bitektine & Haack (2015).

This judgment suppression is a deterrent for members of the Twitter community to engage others and may be a factor in the under-use of Twitter for dialogue and relationship capabilities despite the platform’s technical ability to foster outcomes. The judgment suppression influence may also artificially shrink the number of potential negative responses to tweets, as individual members of the Twitter community may choose not to express a sociopolitical judgment that is counter to the Twitter community norm. Thus, the 3.5% negative response rate to OSEG tweets may underrepresent the number of image communication themes expressed by OSEG on Twitter that did not violate legitimacy expectations. Thus, PR practitioners using Twitter as an IM platform need to be aware that identity gaps on Twitter may be understated.

In summary, when this process begins, the organization's projected image remains in the custodianship of the organization and is intended to seek or reinforce legitimacy. However, when these tweets are responded to, when media communicate through stories and broadcasts, or when regulatory/accrediting bodies make public statements, they act as a prism, refracting the original image in ways that do not always correspond to the original strategic legitimacy-seeking objectives of the organization and potentially suppress deviant opinions.

Citizens using social media influence the legitimacy judgments of others, as social media has increasingly become an information source to assess and negotiate the appropriateness of organizational actions (Castelló, Morsing, & Schultz, 2013; Whelan, Moon, & Grant, 2013). Media have evolved into critical sources of legitimacy validity and have been proven to assist in the shaping of public opinion (Bitektine & Haack, 2015; Carroll & McCombs, 2003; Clavier & El Ghaoui, 2009).

As noted in the framework, in the context of sport, accreditation bodies (Etter et al., 2017) and judicial or trade associations (Bitektine & Haack, 2015) may be considered the different leagues within which the sport organization competes. This is because they regulate the entry and conditions of teams remaining within their league. They are also the judiciary bodies concerned with league infractions for the team and its players. Governments ensure compliance through funding, regulations, and laws. Leagues and governments establish and monitor the rules and norms that determine the way organizations should perform their activities (Deephouse, 1996).

In times of institutional stability or actional legitimacy, when these institutions are likely to view the organization favorably, sport organizations will communicate their

associations or affiliation with such actors seeking linkage legitimacy, as seen in the OSEG case. This activity provides Twitter followers with important legitimacy-validating clues that will guide favourable social judgments towards the organization (Bitektine & Haack, 2015).

Moving to the micro-level on the far-left column, once an image has been received and the corresponding sociopolitical legitimacy judgment made, an individual may decide to act positively or negatively, or they may take no action at all. On Twitter, actions can be measured through Twitter responses by means of content analysis based on organizational tweets, retweets, or response sentiments (Boyd et al., 2010; Etter et al., 2017). In this research, positive responses and retweets of organizational messages (as well as non-responses) were considered legitimacy-granting indicators of OSEG, while negative responses indicated that legitimacy was withheld. These measurements empirically inform the basis of the organization's construed identity and help determine an organization's identity gaps, should any exist.

As noted by the arrows at the top of the framework, if no (or minor) identity gaps exist, the organization can be said to be in a state of successful image co-creation, where both organizational and stakeholder comprehensions of legitimacy (i.e., the organization's license to operate) are mutually understood and agreed upon. Thus, the organization is not obligated to change its identity or tweeting patterns to obtain legitimacy. This is the sought-after state of social PR IM activities. In situations where an identity gap exists, there continues to be a resulting impetus for change or a perceived image/identity discrepancy (Gioia et al., 2014), and the image co-creation process begins

again, requiring the organization to take other actions to change the perception of a legitimacy dimension or change its identity and how it perceives legitimacy.

Conclusion

This study sought to explore how the emergence of social media technology and its use contributes to the development of organizational identity, organizational image, and organizational legitimacy in a social media world. Accordingly, the purpose of this qualitative embedded exploratory case study was to investigate how the emergence of social media technology and its use has contributed to the development of organizational identity, organizational image, and organizational legitimacy in the specific context of sport, using a social theory approach to PR.

This approach allowed further exploration of the interrelationships between identity, image, and legitimacy developed through the literature review. In turn, this helped guide the first study, whose findings indicated that IM from an organizational perspective could indeed be considered legitimacy-seeking in nature and that image co-creation is the manifestation of organizational legitimacy-seeking by internal stakeholders and legitimacy-granting by external stakeholders. This allowed the research to adapt and extend Gioia et al.'s (2014) process model of identity-image interdependence.

Finally, the research sought to explore in more detail the operationalization of the process model of identity-image interdependence, specifically on the platform of Twitter. This allowed the exploration of the more specific, explicit effects of social media, Twitter in particular, regarding identity, legitimacy, image, and how these organizational

constructs manifest in image co-creation. This resulted in a conceptual framework for Twitter that could be empirically observed and analyzed through legitimacy outcomes.

Contributions to Theory and Scholarship

By viewing PR in a social theory context — a non-dominant paradigm of the field — and linking it to IM, the research expanded the scope of scholarship in PR, building on Curtin's (2012) assertion that there is no single paradigm appropriate for research within the PR field. More globally, this exploration also sought to supplement IM research in PR by applying concepts from other fields of study, as suggested by Botan (2017) and Curtin (2012). Through incorporating organizational (identity/image) and neo-institutional theory (legitimacy) into PR scholarship, the study provided insights to all three fields and allowed movement along Mintzberg's (2005) theory continuum. This was done by adapting and extending Gioia and his colleagues' (2014) process model of identity-image interdependence and the creation of a process-based co-creational IM framework within Twitter in the context of a sport conglomerate during times of actional legitimacy.

Nekmat et al. (2014) argued that future considerations in PR IM should seek to fill the scholarly gap formed by the lack of empirical approaches, as “a discriminately large proportion of IM research in PR is focused on examining image as a process of human and mediated communication” (p. 286). To address this, they suggested conceptualizing image as a perceptual attribute derived from individuals' cognitive-attitudinal dispositions toward an organization, allowing future research to address image research not just as a process but also as a measurement outcome.

A social approach to PR allowed the concept of legitimacy to serve as an empirical tool to capture cognitive-attitudinal dispositions, letting the research address IM as both a process and an outcome. Thus, Figures 6.1 and 6.2 speak to Nekmat's suggestion by providing an understanding of how images are scrutinized, using legitimacy dimensions as an analytical tool to capture cognitive-attitudinal dispositions.

In their assessment of the state of the field of PR, Botan and Taylor (2004) suggested that a co-creational approach, one that focuses on long-term relationships, shared meanings, and interpretations beyond the simple achievement of publicity-based goals, was the future of PR research. By using a co-creational approach to IM, the frameworks provide a proposal for how PR scholarship could extend the concept of co-creation. For identity and image scholars, the results of this study suggest the value in studying image as a co-creational construct underpinned by legitimacy-seeking and granting behaviour. It also augments findings of recent studies that depict organizational identity as more dynamic than what was previously understood, by suggesting that legitimacy drives the need for identity change. For legitimacy scholars, the frameworks contribute to theory by providing image as a means to discern how stakeholders observe organizational properties and behaviours that inform their legitimacy judgments. It also provides an empirical process through which an organization might change its observable properties and behaviours.

The research also contributes to the scholarly discussion on brand management versus image management within the context of professional sport (e.g., Agyemang & Williams, 2013; Lock et al., 2015; Sheth & Babiak, 2010). Although brand fell largely outside the scope of this study, the results still demonstrated that the participants in this

specific context essentially saw brand image as indistinguishable from organizational image. It also provided some insights to assist in the further exploration of the relationship between sport, brand image management, and corporate social responsibility, as suggested by Sheth and Babiak (2010).

Ha and Ferguson (2015) highlighted the importance of mutual consent and understanding of the roles between PR and marketing to differentiate their domains, both academically and in practice. By adding to the literature of PR studies in IM, it is anticipated that this research will help move the conversation towards achieving mutual consent and understanding of PR and marketing's roles within IM. Proposing legitimacy as the key underlying driver of IM illustrates the need to view IM at the societal level, beyond the marketing perspective that focuses on specific products or actions of organizational identity that seek to communicate a specific image to stakeholders (Balmer & Greyser, 2003; Cornelissen, Haslam, & Balmer, 2007; Moingeon, & Soenen, 2002), often under a single name and icon (Agyemang & Williams, 2013).

Regarding sport PR specifically, the research showed that providing advice to the marketing function and claiming a greater strategic management role would bring additional clarity to the multi-disciplined field of PR in the sport industry. It also suggested that, although an excess of self-promotion is seen as a faux pas in more general PR, excessive self-publicizing did not seem to have any significant negative results for OSEG on Twitter. This is a surprising finding in light of prior results (e.g., Kwak et al., 2010; Luchman et al., 2014; Stavros et al., 2014) and bears further examination.

For the sport management field, the study provided a nuanced understanding of managing multiple team images within a conglomerate sport organization. As Deephouse

and Suchman (2008) noted, because legitimacy is assessed by multiple audiences regarding multiple activities, organizations could become more legitimate by becoming legitimate to more stakeholders through their negotiating activities. This process could be seen through the perspective-driven approach to image understanding articulated by OSEG employees, who understood when to emphasize differences among teams and when to capitalize on the positive attributes of OSEG's image based on context-specific circumstances. While each team image was viewed as distinct, there was also acknowledgment of the benefit of associations with the global organizational image. Such actions were described as the "bleeding" together of team and organizational image. They provided a synergy for team image development based on overarching organizational identity. This allowed team image to draw on the more holistic organizational image based on context and allowed greater variance of image perceptions than would otherwise be available.

The widespread popularity of social media in sport underscores the importance of developing new directions in sport PR regarding IM. While there were some studies on how Twitter could be used to create images through impression management (e.g., Lee et al., 2014; Linville et al., 2012; Smith et al., 2012), these did not focus on IM, which is, as per the literature review, distinct from impression management because it concerns itself primarily with attempts to project a desirable image based on stakeholder feedback and thus implicitly acknowledges a difference between identity and image (Cornelissen et al., 2007; He & Balmer, 2007) if the desirable cognitive image of identity the organization seeks differs from an organization's authentic and transparent expressions of identity (Taiminen et al., 2015).

This study explored the concept that sport organizations could not adequately perform self-presentation (impression management) in a digital and convergent society due to the complexity of the multiple communication platforms available. This decreases an organization's ability to control messages. Instead, it is proposed that organizations enter co-creative image negotiations with active stakeholders, who use social media to redistribute, confirm, and modify projections of organizational identity. Similarly, while the motivation of fans', athletes', and organizations' usage of Twitter has been explored relative to engagement and identification (Abeza & O'Reilly 2014; Avidar, 2013; Gioia et al., 2014; Kwak et al., 2010; Lee & Park, 2013; Stavros et al., 2014; Wakefield & Hancock, 2016; Waters et al., 2011), it had not been viewed from a co-creational image perspective, as in this study.

Figures 6.1 and 6.2, further constituted an empirical exploration of the ways identity, image, and legitimacy relationships have developed in a social media world, particularly regarding Twitter. They offer a structured understanding of the ways an organization's identity projections reverberate and refract through the potentially chaotic platform of Twitter. Finally, they offered insight more generally into the ways social media has (or, in some cases, has not) transformed the nature of PR in a sport setting.

Implications for Practice

From a practitioner perspective, the research explored the emergence of social media technology in the development of organizational identity, image, and legitimacy to provide insights necessary for developing an informed strategy to foster the effective use of IM and sport PR's role within it. Results indicated that sport organization employees principally viewed IM as equivalent to brand management at the individual team level,

although further probing revealed that team versus organizational distinctiveness is context-dependent, as each team principally shared common attributes that formed the foundation of organizational identity.

External stakeholders did not define team image or organizational image distinctions as clearly as did sport organization employees. This insight was important, because in a conglomerate sport organization, it can help identify situations where sport executives might want to focus on different team versus organizational images to achieve their objectives. For example, government stakeholders viewed the sport organization from a holistic corporate perspective, which made team-related images less salient. A holistic corporate viewpoint was also predominant among media and sponsors of a sport organization through their interactions with the players, team, media support staff, and front office personnel. Fans generally viewed the teams as distinct, but there was some degree of variance based on their level of engagement, with highly engaged fans more aware of the organizational image.

Thus, conglomerate sport organizations must still develop and maintain a strong organizational identity in addition to that of their teams. This identity provides the core values for each of the sport teams. These non-team specific core values should encompass society-level legitimacy dimensions, as meeting the expectations of the community at large is not only key to team success but also provides a positive image for owners vis-à-vis securing government and community support. These core values also allow for a perspective-driven IM approach that permits the emphasis of differences among teams when required while offering the ability to capitalize on the positive attributes of the sport organization itself based on context-specific circumstances. This

allows individual teams to draw on more image perceptions than would otherwise be available. This “bleeding” of team and organizational image allows the team to appeal to more external stakeholders, providing a synergy for team image development based on overarching organizational identity.

In addition, understanding insights of how one team’s image might affect another has managerial implications. For example, during the study period, the Ottawa Fury announced they were leaving the NASL and would join the lower-tiered USL the following season. Due to the Fury’s focus on creating a vibrant and family friendly game atmosphere, augmented by similar team attributes of the RedBlacks and 67’s, the move had little effect on team attendance (B. Ash, personal communication, August 2, 2017).

The distinction of the interrelationships among the teams and the parent organization was less apparent on Twitter. Twitter accounts showed homogeneity in activity regardless of the team or organizational feed. Twitter was most often used for team and event promotion, a finding in line with the marketing perspective uncovered during the interview process. While excessive self-promotion can have negative ramifications in other industries, this was not apparent in this research, indicating that there is a higher threshold to promote teams on Twitter by sport PR and marketing practitioners than previously thought.

However, during non-crisis times, sport PR practitioners need to be aware when monitoring the Twitter environment that validation institutions, such as media, leagues, government, and other Twitter users, have a suppressing effect on dialogue in Twitter regarding negative messages. Therefore, it is important for those responsible for IM on

the social media platform not to rely on Twitter as the only form of environmental monitoring in terms of how team and organizational images are being accepted.

This suppressing effect of dialogue on Twitter likely contributes to the generally accepted notion that Twitter is underutilized. While Twitter has been traditionally used as a promotional vehicle, it can also be used to dialogically engage in broader issues in the community that might extend beyond its current follower base. To do this while fostering dialogue by mitigating judgment suppression, sport PR practitioners should consider creating an organizational Twitter account or repurposing one if it already exists, not to focus on team promotion (as current team Twitter accounts do) but to instead focus on the issues of the community in which it wants to participate. Such an action should encourage dialogic communication around specific issues that may be indirectly related to their teams but relevant to the larger community. This will further integrate a sport organization and its teams with the broader public sphere and potentially increase its fanbase as it builds relationships with those who might not have otherwise engaged with the sport organization or its teams.

There was little consensus regarding the domain of organizational IM between PR and marketing. Within the context of OSEG, IM was thought of as an organization-wide charge. This finding suggested that conducting sport PR with a legitimacy-seeking philosophy and environmental monitoring responsibilities is uniquely situated to champion such a holistic perspective. This would allow sport PR practitioners to better define their value to the organization, better integrate their day-to-day activities into larger organizational objectives, and open potential roles in management.

Study Scope and Limitations

Notwithstanding the rigour demonstrated in this research through its audit trail and demonstrations of trustworthiness through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Gruba, 1981), this dissertation was subject to limitations, as with all research undertakings, including case studies. To achieve credibility, a multi-method examination with multiple sources of data was used. The dissertation was subject to limitations in the form of the interview process (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007), the longitudinal scope and size of the captured tweets (Abeza et al., 2015), and a natural frequency bias due to the dialogic nature of the Twitter data captured (Macnamara, 2015).

A condition of OSEG's participation in interviews was that they would assist the researcher in identifying a pool of potential participants. Members of this pool were then contacted by the organization to make them aware of the study and that the researcher may be contacting them. Even though the researcher independently selected names from that pool, an unavoidable management selection influence was present. While the steps taken to alleviate such influence were detailed earlier in ethical procedures (p. 127), this remained a limitation of the research. A random sample of employees who qualified for the study may or may not have resulted in different findings.

In addition, the semi-structured interviews might be impacted due to the characteristics or beliefs of the interviewer (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007) and the philosophical underpinnings supporting qualitative methodologies (Lincoln & Gruba, 1985). Thus, objectivity was maintained only as far as possible within the social constructivist paradigm used in this research, where no single truth can be achieved with

exact precision. Similarly, bias in the data collection process was possible, as participants may wish to knowingly withhold information or choose to portray themselves in a positive manner (Golden, 1992).

While every effort was made to ensure all questions from the interview protocol were asked in a consistent a manner, this was not always possible due to the nature of the interview responses and the time constraints of the interviewees (especially the fan interviews conducted at the games). While it is important to note the interview limitations, it is also important to acknowledge the steps taken to minimize their impacts, noted earlier in the study's section on trustworthiness and plausibility (p. 124), namely the corroboration of accounts vis-à-vis theoretical saturation, pilot interviews, member checking of interview transcripts, and the researcher's independent section of interviewees from the OSEG pool of participants.

Within the data source of Twitter, limitations included the overall size of the dataset (Alowibdi, Buy, & Yu, 2013) and varied time periods of the commencement of data collection due to Twitter's streaming API restrictions to the public, the rules of which are noted on page 111. In addition, the study was delimited to Twitter followship of the OSEG accounts as the sole marker of the relations between the organization and its stakeholders on social media. In the online findings, the use of Twitter emphasized business-to-consumer (B-2-C) dialogue. Therefore, results might not translate into sports PR's efforts in IM and relationship-building with corporate stakeholders.

This study focused on the social media platform of Twitter. Thus, it is important to note that the findings of this study may not be transferable to other social media platforms due to the differences in their dialogical features, as noted on page 100. While

scholars have extracted data from other platforms, such as Facebook (e.g., Boehmer & Lacy, 2014), Instagram (e.g., Geurin-Eagleman & Burch, 2016), and Pinterest (Hambrick & Kang, 2015), Twitter's API remains conducive to extracting large, dynamic datasets, which was necessary for a project of this scope. Thus, bounding the dissertation to collecting social media data via Twitter was attributable to the content and relational data that could not have been collected from other platforms (due to lack of accessibility and software capabilities).

In addition, Bitektine and Haack (2015) and Etter et al. (2017) argued that the existence of social judgment-inhibiting factors likely creates a non-response bias that the study was not able to empirically measure, as explained at the end of page 260. Also, while Twitter is a popular subject in sport communication literature (Naraine, 2017) and for various sport stakeholders (e.g., fans, athletes, organizations), studies in this area may wish to incorporate additional social media platforms to examine enactments of image management beyond Twitter communication. It is also important to note that as both professional sport organizations and society become accustomed to social media, they might adopt new platforms to engage in discourse. As noted by Luchman et al. (2014), a challenge of research associated with social media is the fact that social media sites continually undergo feature changes in response to social norms, technology, and legislation. This constant evolution might risk the applicability of some of the findings of this dissertation in the coming years.

Finally, research efforts only included the regional nature of the sample, representative of Ottawa, Canada. Therefore, the single case study approach limits the potential to transfer findings to other provinces or countries. Such a limitation was

expected, given the social context of the research, which varies according to the social norms of society (Lock et al., 2015). This limitation was not a design flaw but a result of the characteristics of the method chosen.

Future Directions

The proposed theoretical frameworks align with the view of Chalip (2006), who suggested that sport management research needs to both advance theory and be relevant for practitioners. Such thoughts have also been echoed within PR studies (L'Etang, 2012; Stacks, 2016). The value of frameworks such as the ones proposed in this research is that they are not affixed to a particular event. Legitimacy judgments are made within individually shared experiences, so any organizational event or action that attracts a quantity of tweets, retweets, or replies could be a potential subject to analyze using the framework outlined in Figure 6.2.

Thus, this study informs a number of avenues where future research can be conducted. First, applying the framework within the true context of Tier 1 sport may provide some additional insights. While a conglomerate organization of Tier 2 sport was chosen due to the limitations mentioned on page 17, it still exhibited the same characteristics as Tier 1 sport, as noted on page 18. However, an opportunity for future studies to research the same topic within the true context of Tier 1 sport may provide additional contextual insights. Such comparative studies may involve other conglomerate organizations or single entity sport organizations. This would also help mitigate effects of the regional nature of the current study and offer potential for increased generalizability to other provinces and countries.

A cross-sectional study of Tier 1 sport PR, marketing professionals, and organization executives could also be valuable in identifying additional understandings of legitimacy, image, identity, the aforementioned concepts' practice in professional sport, and perceived ownership of IM among an organization's functional departments. As noted on pages 129 to 134, many internal stakeholders did not distinguish between team brand — a marketing concept — and organizational image, a concept more identified with organizational communication and PR.

Such a study would not only provide additional details on the relationship between IM and legitimacy but also further illuminate the domains, or potential lack thereof, between PR and marketing. As noted on page 274, Ha and Ferguson (2015) suggest that it is only through mutual consent and understanding of their roles that the two disciplines may differentiate their domains, both academically and in practice. A cross-sectional study that asked who should be responsible for IM could help provide clarity and potentially more generalizable insights than what was uncovered in this single embedded exploratory case study. Such a study could also provide insights into the meanings of identity, image, and brand between the context of the marketing and PR disciplines.

From an organizational point of view, further investigation into whether sociopolitical judgments regarding legitimacy extend beyond IM would be of interest. It would be noteworthy to learn how a stakeholder's perceptions of an organization's legitimacy translate into actions beyond Twitter. For instance, do perceptions of organizational legitimacy effect a fan's decision to purchase tickets or merchandise of a sport organization? How might it influence an organization's attempt to enter or maintain

public-private partnerships, which are common in the sports industry (i.e., public stadium financing, tax exemptions, bylaw exemptions). Such research could also extend to how IM affects sponsorship practices, as the interrelationship of organizational image and legitimacy could have implications to one of the primary tenets of sponsorship: image transfer.

While the current study was conducted during a time of organizational stability (i.e., few if any existing identity gaps), a similar study in which an organization is experiencing significant identity gaps or institutional change would also prove insightful. For example, the legitimacy dimensions by which organizations are judged during times of instability or crisis may be different than during times of stability. During such times, a stakeholder or stakeholder group may seek to challenge an organization on a specific issue based on an organization's legitimacy-seeking action or behaviour not meeting a sociopolitical judgment. A study seeking to understand how such stakeholder(s) to act to gain the attention of the organization and other organizational stakeholders in a social media world to influence organizational change through social control (legitimacy) in regard to organizational identity and IM would provide additional understandings for both theory and practice. Such a study, isolated on a single sociopolitical judgment, might allow additional insights into the frameworks outlined in Figures 6.1 and 6.2, specifically around the process of significant identity and image change. Practically, it could help stakeholders more effectively broadcast their demands when seeking public support or attempting to influence an organization's actions and shape the meaning of socially responsible behaviour. For PR practitioners, it could provide insights to assist in developing IM strategies and mitigate challenges to organizational legitimacy.

While the study noted the judgment validation institutions associated with OSEG, as well as its potential to diminish dialogue on Twitter and to understate identity gaps during times of institutional stability (p. 295), it did not explicitly measure those effects. Further research into the analytical study of the influence of judgment validation institutions and their effects on judgement suppression would be valuable. While this study did not explicitly look into or seek to empirically measure such effects, such research could provide additional insights to further extend the study and how IM is enacted in an online environment. This may be operationalized through extensive interviews with an organization's online community, the development of quantitative scales, or the adaptation of existing social media measures to assist in the unpacking of the alchemy in the interactions between not just outside validations institutions (i.e., media, government, leagues) but also among the online participants themselves as a potential source of organizational legitimacy. The relationship between online peer affect-based expressions of judgement and opinions among social media users' responses and expressions of judgement has been suggested to be an additional source of organizational legitimacy (Etter et al., 2017). While this notion is beyond the scope of this research, further IM and legitimacy-oriented exploration of the conceptual relationship of online public discourse would be well-received within social media scholarship.

This study was delimited to one social media platform (Twitter). Extending this study using other social media platforms would provide a more in-depth understanding of how IM and legitimacy judgments are made online. Facebook may not lend itself to a similar study, as followership ties on that platform are binary and symmetrical (except for

instances where a user “likes” a business, organization, or celebrity “page”). Due to the rate of change in the social media domain, it may be informative to broaden future research projects to include emerging platforms such as Instagram, whose followership is not symmetrical and could therefore provide data for such a study.

Finally, related to extension of IM beyond a single social media platform, a study that investigates best practices on the use of social media as an IM tool to achieve legitimacy goals (i.e., who uses it best, how, and why) may also provide a practical contribution. This study will grant sport communicators more information than what is contained in this single case study. In turn, this will allow sport communicators to design an informed strategy that enables the effective implementation of social media as a legitimacy-building tool for sport PR.

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Appendices

Appendix A: The Changing Role and Definition of PR Through Time

Table A1

The Changing Role and Definition of Public Relations Through Time

Time	Public relations activities and how society shaped public relations practice	Public Relations Definitions and Understandings
Early Beginnings	Rulers used events and symbols to show their power and create propaganda. The Rosetta stone (196 BC) was a publicity release touting a pharaoh's accomplishments. Alexander the Great publicized his battlefield victories by sending reports to the Macedonian court. Julius Caesar published a book, held elaborate parades to celebrate his military victories, and posted public proceedings on the walls throughout the city. The Apostles Peter and Paul used speeches, staged events, and letters to attract attention and gain support for their new religion. Sport: Ancient Greece used the Olympics to showcase Greek culture, values, and create heroes. Later, Roman Emperors held gladiatorial and circus games to amuse their citizens and demonstrate their power.	N/A

The Middle Ages	Rulers continued to use events and symbols to show their power and create propaganda. Pope Urban II used symbolism and staged events to persuade thousands to join the crusades. The church created the first public relations department, with the establishment of the College of Propaganda under Pope Gregory XV. Venetian bankers began investor relations and adopted corporate philanthropy when they sponsored artists such as Michelangelo. Sport: Kings and nobles held jousts and tournaments that showcased archery and sword skill to demonstrate their power and wealth.	N/A
19 th Century: Modern Beginnings	With the advent of the printing press, press agency emerged as printed documents become an important propaganda tool. Pamphlets, public lectures, and posters were used in England to abolish slavery. Sam Adams, founder of the Sons of Liberty, organized what PRWeek called “the greatest publicity stunt of all time,” the Boston Tea Party. Tom Paine’s “Common Sense” leaflet promoted American independence from Britain. Sir Wilfred Laurier, Prime Minister of Canada, created a trans-Atlantic campaign to attract European immigrants to settle the west Sport: New York-based penny newspapers initiated sport and leisure coverage.	N/A

Early 20th
Century:
Pioneering the
field

Corporations began employing early forms of public relations, specifically publicity.

Movement from the “public be damned” period of 19th century to the “public be informed” period.

Muckraking journalism began and was countered by defensive publicity by organizations with a goal of disseminating information favourable to the firm.

In 1900, the first public relations firm, the “Publicity Bureau,” was founded in Boston.

Publicity became proactive with the creation of the Committee of Public Information by the US government to mobilize public support for WWI.

Principles and practices learned during the war were then used by corporations to promote goods and services.

German academic Carl Hundhausen was the first to use the term Public Relations as it is presently known in 1937.

Post-WWII public relations was used to counter government legislation and promote social causes and conduct. Professional associations and education programs were formed.

Sport: The 1920s formed the “Golden Age” of sports journalism, as athletes, coaches, and sportswriters become household names. Publicity was proactively promoting sport with little oversight. Later, during the “perspective” period between the 1930’s and 1950’s, society took a more critical view of sport public relations activities as it became a political tool for governments (especially the Olympics). Professional leagues developed.

“A management function, which tabulates public attitudes, defines the policies, procedures, and interests of an organization... followed by executing a program of action to earn public understanding and acceptance.” – Lee & Berneys (early 1900s, exact date not known but widely considered the first definition of public relations).

“Public Relations determines what the public should be interested in and what information they should receive.” – Norse, 1906

“Publicity supplies accurate information concerning the subjects which it is of value and interest to the public to know.” – Lee, 1906

“Public relations is those aspects of our personal and corporate behaviour which have social and public significance, and our adjustment to them in a way that promotes the public welfare and interest as currently defined by mass opinion.” – Childs, 1936.

“Public relations is the activities of a corporation, union, government or other organization in building and maintaining sound and productive relations with special publics such as customers, employees, or stockholders, and with the public at large, so as to adapt itself to the environment and interpret itself to society.” – Griswold, 1944

Public relations is a reciprocal process of listening and telling, coupled with a willingness to make the business what the public wants it to be, rather than trying to convince them that they should like the business for what it is.” – Gonsor, 1954

Public relations is the attempt, by information, persuasion and adjustment, to engineer public support for an activity, cause, movement or institution.” – Bernays, 1955

Late 20th
Century:
Coming of Age

During this period of protest and empowerment, consumerism, environmentalism, racism, and sexism were high on the public agenda and used public relations to create social change, as individuals felt alienated by rapid technology changes and a lack of community. Public relations became pilots of public conversation and interpreters of public and stakeholder opinions. Television joined radio and print, expanding vehicles for public relations activities.

In the 1960's, anti-business sentiment was high, and organizations realized the need to become more socially responsible and responsive to their stakeholders to counter "corporate campaigns" against them by activist groups. The concept of creating dialogue and adapting corporate policy emerged, and public relations definitions became more normative and managerial-based.

From this anti-business sentiment, the concept of issues management emerged. Later in the 1970s and early 80s, the recession and subsequent stock market reforms led to the concept that organizations must disclose information that may affect stock price, and so investor relations became part of public relations practice. This new focus on the importance of the environment led to the adoption of a general systems theory of public relations, and public relations as a boundary spanning role between the organization and its environment.

Due to the growth of media and its expanding role beyond media relations, in the 1980s the concept of public relations as a managerial function took root, and strategic public relations became popular, linking public relations to organizational strategy. This link to strategy also made reputation a central public relations theme as well as the concept of public relations as a function of integrated marketing communications (IMC).

In 1984, the landmark excellence study by James Grunig and the International Association of Business Communication

"Public relations is all activities and attitudes intended to judge, adjust to, influence, and direct the opinions of any groups or groups of persons in the interest of any individual, group or institution. The universe of public relations involves research into all audiences receiving information from them; advising management of attitudes and responses; helping set policy that will demonstrate a responsible attention to those attitudes and responses; and constantly evaluating the effectiveness of all programs. It is an inclusive role embracing *all* activities having to do with ascertaining and influencing the opinion of a group." – Newson & Scott 1976

"Public relations is a distinctive management function which helps establish and maintain mutual lines of communication, understanding, acceptance and cooperation between an organization and its publics; involves the management of problems or issues; helps management to keep informed on and responsive to public opinion; defines and emphasizes the responsibility of management to serve the public interest; helps management keep abreast of and effectively utilize change, serving as an early warning system to help anticipate trends; and uses research and sound and ethical communication techniques as its principal tools." – Harlow, 1976

"The management of communication between an organization and its publics." – Grunig and Hunt (1984).

"Public relations is the management function which evaluates public attitudes, identifies the policies and procedures of an individual or an organization with the public interest, and plans and executes a program of action to earn public understanding and acceptance." – Olasky, 1984

"Public Relations is the multiphased function of communication management that is involved in researching, analyzing, affecting, and reevaluating the relationships between and organization and any aspect of its environment." – Crable & Vibbert, 1986

concluded that organizational goals could be achieved through interactions with strategic constituencies and the use of symmetrical communication to cultivate important relationships. This study created the dominant paradigm of public relations around symmetrical two-way organizational public relationships.

Sport: For the first time, fans could experience sport visually without attending the event with the invention and mass distribution of television. Specialized sport stations were launched, and most large sport organizations had a dedicated public relations department. Interest in spectator sport rose. Former NFL Commissioner Pete Rozelle was named The Sporting News 20th century most powerful person in sports in part due to his pioneering efforts to define the NFL sport brand through public relations.

“Public relations is the management function that establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and publics on whom its success or failure depends.” – Cutlip Center & Broom, 1994

“Public relations is a management function that helps achieve organizational objectives, define philosophy, and facilitate organizational change. Public relations practitioners communicate with all relevant internal and external publics to develop positive relationships and to create consistency between organizational goals and societal expectations. Public relations practitioners develop, execute, and evaluate organizational programs that promote the exchange of influence and understanding among an organization’s constituent parts and publics.” – Baskin, Aronoff & Lattimore, 1997

“Public relations is the active participation in social construction of meaning.” – Gordon, 1997

“Public Relations is managing Strategic Relationships.” – Hutton 1999

1990s to
Present:
Globalization
and the Digital
Age

Technology continued to accelerate and multiply communication channels such as cable and satellite television as well as digital and social media platforms. This created the 24-7 news cycle and instantaneous personal interaction.

The demand for instantaneous personal interaction has created an increased emphasis on the sensitivity and knowledge of multiple cultural audiences as well as increased demand for transparency as the public demands more accountability

Media is becoming increasingly fragmented, and so the demands and specialization of public relations practice continues to expand. This makes the management and integration of messages more difficult.

The world global economy developed to feature global competition and interdependence.

Sport: In addition to dealing with increased communication outlets, sport public relations has moved beyond the sport field to also deal with the legal, political, economic, and cultural implications of sport. With the increased number of ways to interact with publics, sport is once again gaining greater influence in society

“Public relations is the management function, that entails planning, research, publicity, promotion, and collaborative decision making to help an organization’s ability to listen to, appreciate, and respond appropriately to those person or groups whose mutually beneficial relationships the organization needs to foster as it strives to achieve its mission and vision.” – Heath & Coombs, 2006

“Public relations is the strategic management of relationships between an organization and its diverse publics, through the use of communication, to achieve mutual understanding, realize organizational goals and serve the public interest.” – Flynn, Gregory, & Valin, 2008 (official definition of the Canadian Public Relations Society)

“A communication function of management through which organizations adapt to, alter, or maintain their environment for the purposes of achieving organization goals.” – Lawrence, Long & Hazelton, 2009

“Strategic management of competition and conflict for the benefit for the benefits of one owns organization, and when possible-also for the mutual benefit of the organization and its various stakeholders or publics.” – Cameron, 2012

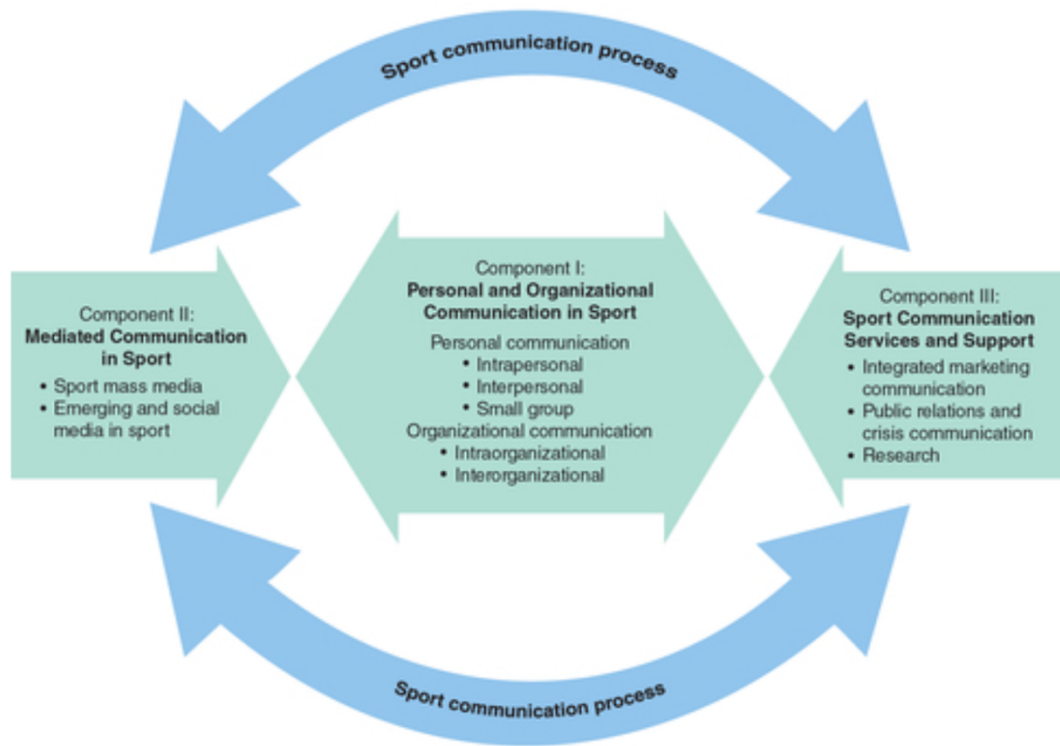
“Public relations may be understood as the occupation responsible for the management of organizational relationships and reputation. It encompasses issues management, public affairs, corporate communications, stakeholder relations, risk communication and corporate social responsibility. Public relations operates on behalf of many different types of organization both at the governmental and corporate level, to small business and voluntary sectors. Public relations activity (which may be carried out by salaried staff or commissioned agents designated as ‘expert’, or, indeed, by unpaid or unspecialised ‘amateurs’) arises at points of societal change and resistance.” – L’Etang, 2013

“Public relations is about reputation – the result of what you do, what you say and what others say about you.

Public relations is the discipline that looks after an organisation's reputation. Its aim is to win understanding and support, and influence opinion and behaviour. It establishes and maintains goodwill and mutual understanding between an organisation and its publics.” – Chartered Institute of Public Relations, 2014

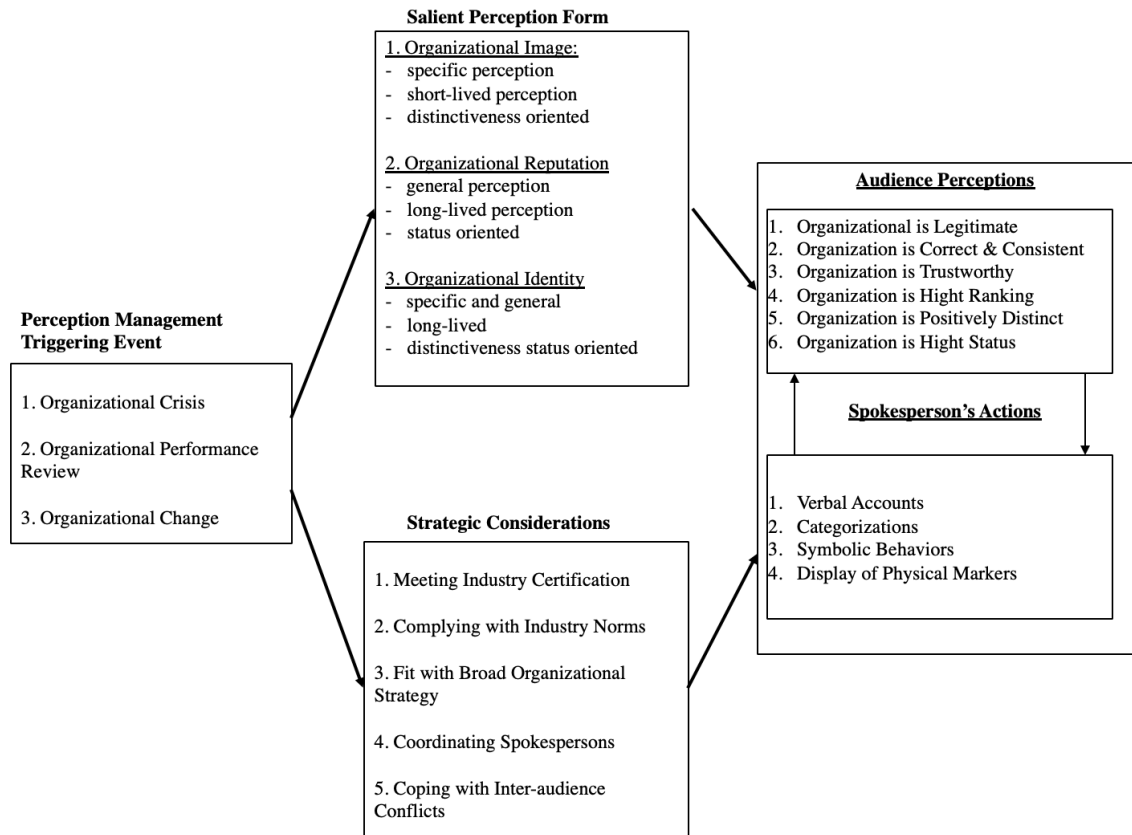
Source: As cited in Wilcox & Cameron, 2012; Broom & Sha, 2013; Pedersen, Miloch, & Laucella, 2007; Fortunato, 2008; Gordon, 1997; Hutton, 2010; Harlow, 1976; L’Etang, 2013a, 2013b; Heath & Coombs, 2005; Wilcox & Cameron, 2012; Canadian Public Relations Society, 2016; Chartered Institute of Public Relations, 2017.

Appendix B: The Strategic Sport Communication Model (Pedersen et al., 2017, p. 107)



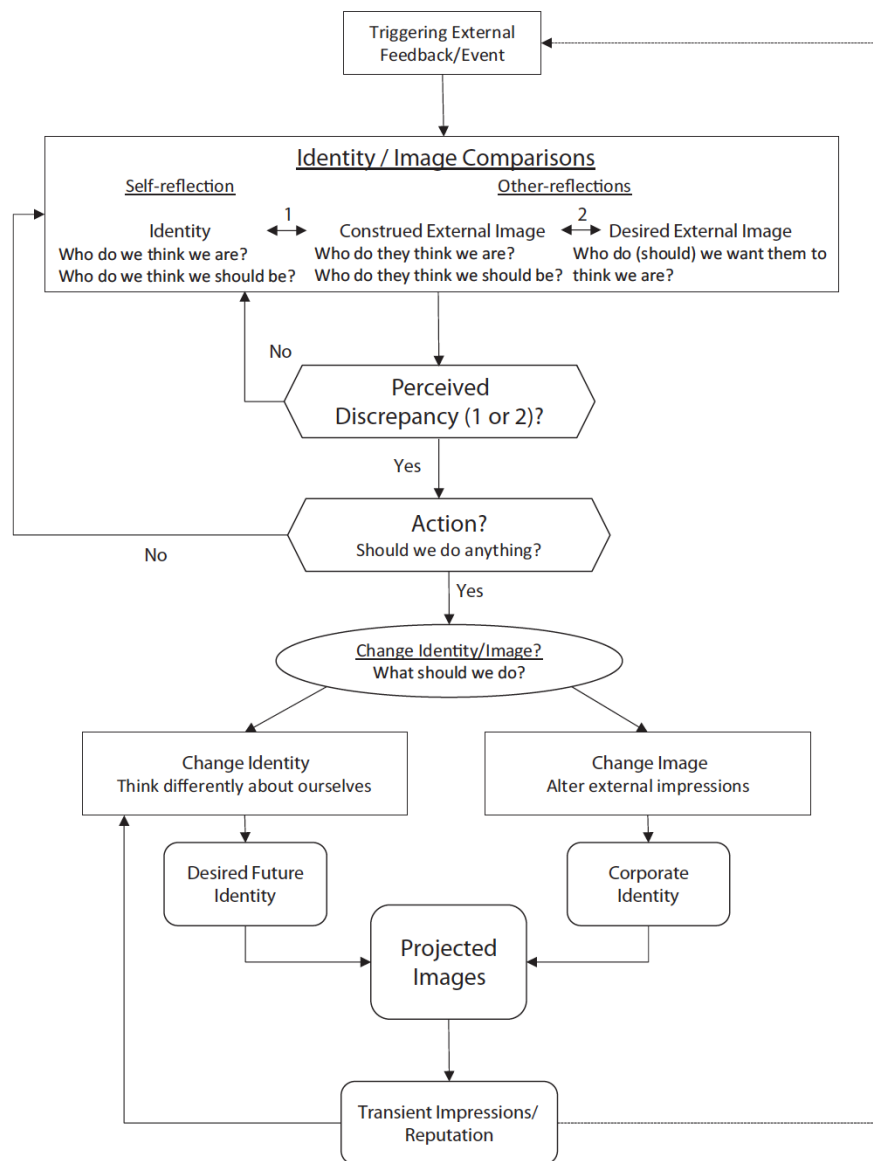
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Appendix C: The Process of Organizational Perception Management (Elsbach, 2003, p. 38)



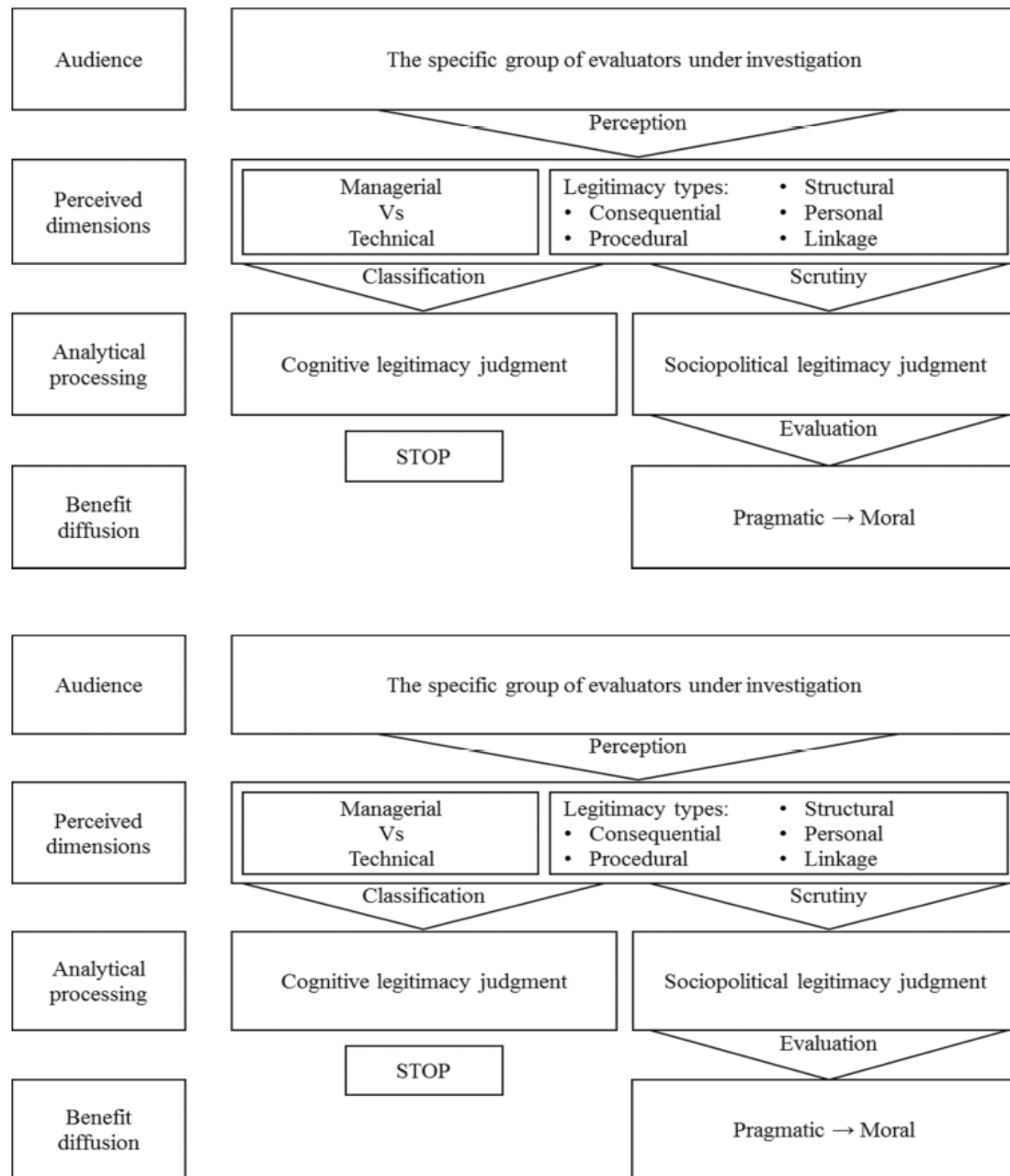
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Appendix D: Process Model of Identity-Image Independence (Gioia et al., 2014, p.22)



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Appendix E: Conceptual Framework for Legitimacy Judgments (Bitektine, 2011)
Adapted from Lock et al. (2015, p. 364)



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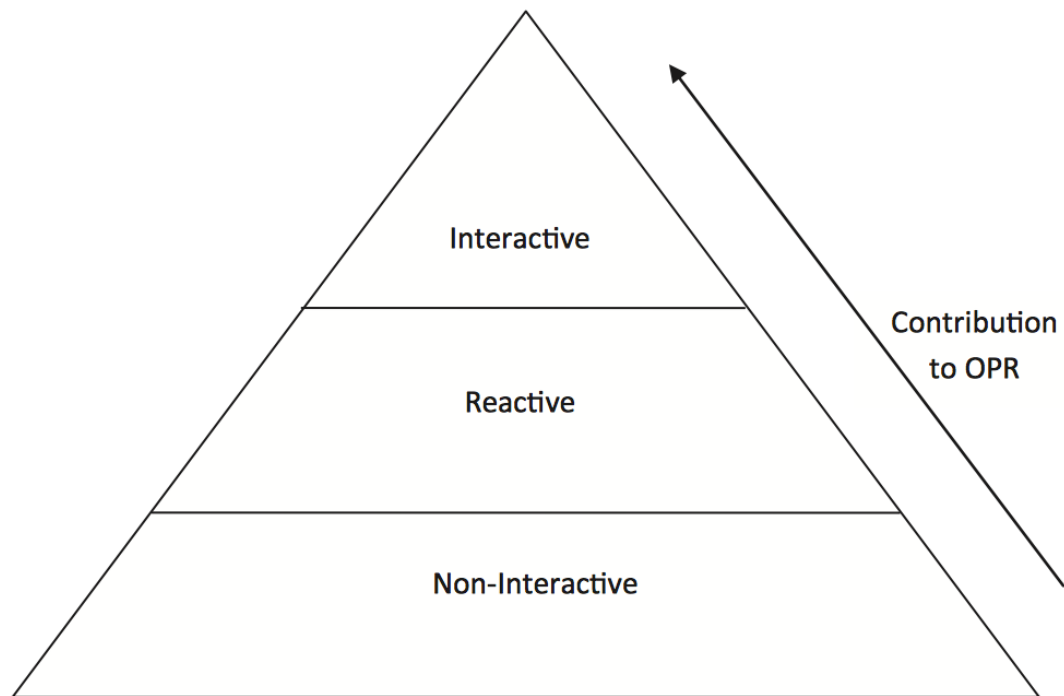
Appendix F: Types of Legitimacy-Informing Constituent Evaluations (Dimensions [Lock et al. 2015, p. 364])

Legitimacy Types	Evaluation	Focus
Consequential	How do the consequences of an organization's actions diffuse benefit to constituents and the industry or community it serves?	Postaction evaluation in relation to the perceived outcomes and benefits of organizational actions.
Procedural	Are an organization's processes and procedures appropriate in relation to social and cultural norms?	Evaluation of specific organizational procedures in comparison with salient social and cultural norms.
Structural	Do the recurring features of organizational processes align with social and cultural norms?	Evaluation of procedures subsumed as recurring features of a broader organizational system.
Personal	Are the leaders and ambassadors of an organization charismatic?	Evaluation of leader charisma relative to social and cultural expectations.
Linkage	Does an organization maintain links with legitimate actors in its social environment?	Evaluation of the extent that an organization retains links with legitimate social actors.
Managerial	Does the organization perform efficiently and effectively in relation to normative expectations?	Evaluation of effectiveness and efficiency of organizational practices in relation to normative expectations.
Technical	Are the core technologies, services, and qualifications of staff appropriate relative to institutionalized norms?	Evaluation of core technologies, services, and qualifications in relation to rationalized standards.

Source: Adapted from Bitektine (2011) and Suchman (1995).

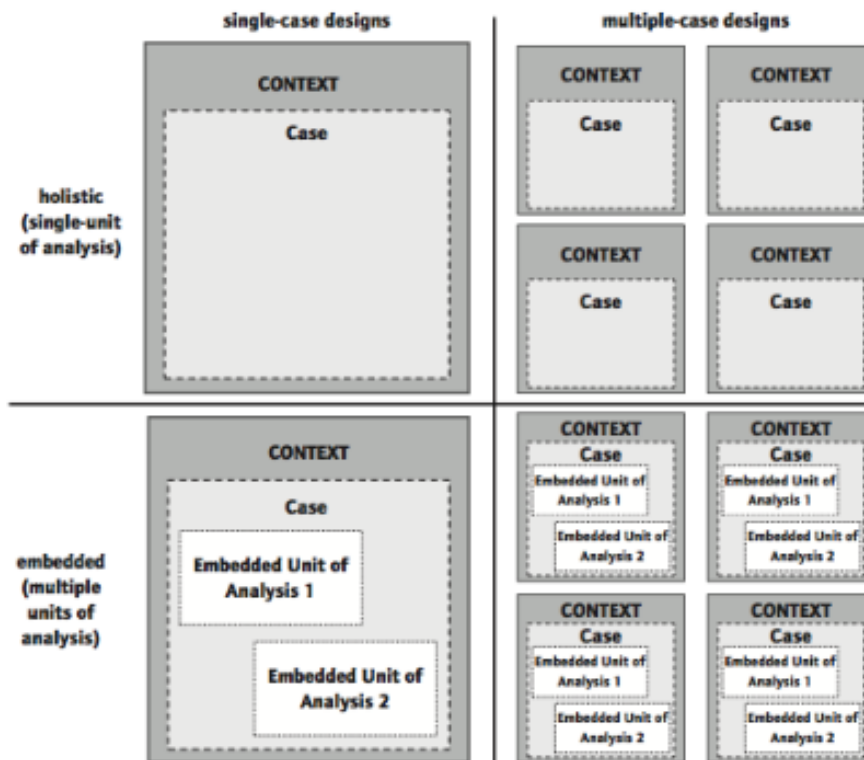
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Appendix G: Responsiveness Pyramid with Relation to Contribution of Interactivity by Organizational Public Relations (Avidar, 2013, p. 65) — OPR=Organizational-Public Relationship



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Appendix H: Basic Types of Designs for Cases (Yin, 2014, p.50)



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Appendix I: Interview Guide

Used to establish identity, projected image, construed image, image, notions of legitimacy, and sport PR's role (Lock et al., 2015; Elsbach, 2003; Pratt, 2013; Brüggemann, 2014; Pina et al., 2006; Kitchen, Tourky, Dean, & Shaalan, 2013).

Questions

Internal Club Interviews

- 1) What does public relations mean to you?
- 2) Who has responsibility for public relations and/or image management in your organization (person[s]/department[s])?
 - a) Do you think they are different? Why or why not?
 - i) If distinguish, ask Q3, 4 separately.
- 3) What do you consider public relations/image management issues or challenges?
 - a) How do you deal with these challenges?
- 4) How do you currently perceive the organization? What is your image of it?
 - a) Internally
 - b) Externally
- 5) How do you think others currently perceive the organization?
 - a) Internally
 - b) Externally
- 6) How have you seen the image of the organization change?
 - a) Internally
 - b) Externally
- 7) What do you think were the reasons for those changes?
- 8) Do you feel there is a discrepancy between the organization's current image and its desired future image?
- 9) Do you distinguish between organizational role and organizational purpose in your community of stakeholders?
 - a) If so, how?
 - b) Do they differ among stakeholder groups? If so how?
 - c) If distinguish, ask Q5, 6 and 7 separately for each.
- 10) What role or purpose do you perceive your organization fulfills in your community of stakeholders?
 - a) What is its value to the community?
 - b) To the organization?
 - c) How do you think your community perceives your role and purpose?
 - i) Do you think you reflect your stakeholder values? Why or why not?
 - ii) What symbolic actions (if any) do you use to communicate these perceptions?
- 11) How is this role fulfillment related to your own company's values?
- 12) How is this role fulfillment related to your mission statement?
- 13) How do you rank your organization compared to others in your league, your city, and North America?

- 14) What makes you different from other organizations in your league, your city, and North America?
- 15) Do you feel your organization communicates well (i.e., is assessable, uses common language, answers questioned asked) and is approachable for your community of stakeholders?
 - a) Could you explain the differences of the above qualities (if any) among these groups:
 - i) Coaches.
 - ii) Players.
 - iii) Staff.
 - iv) Owner/board.
 - v) Team president (leadership).
 - vi) In-arena.
 - vii) Online.
 - b) Do they communicate and reflect the images or perceptions of the organization you wish to project that you established earlier?
 - i) -What are the barriers?
 - ii) -Do they provide timely feedback?
- 16) Do you feel your community of stakeholders sees your organization as logical (fair, consistent, rational, stable, progressive)?
- 17) Do you feel your community of stakeholders sees your organization as trustworthy (competent, benevolent, dependable, having integrity)?
- 18) Do you express these concepts individually or together?
 - a) Why or why not?
 - b) If distinguish, ask Qi, ii, separately
 - i) How do you express these concepts (i.e., coaches, players, staff, owner/board, in-arena, online)?
 - ii) Could you explain the differences (if any) between these groups?
- 19) What does legitimacy mean to you?
 - a) How do you express it?
 - i) Prompt if required. (Do you see it as proper or appropriate actions within socially constructed norms, values, beliefs?)
 - ii) If so who are your reference groups (e.g., other teams in leagues, in city, media, community activists, government)?
- 20) What would you consider more important to be successful in (rank)
 - a) Competition success.
 - b) Business success.
 - c) Community development.
 - d) Community relations.
 - e) How do you see the interrelationships among these factors?
 - f) Do you think it is important to have players/employees from the city/country the team operates in?

External Stakeholder Interviews

- 1) What does public relations mean to you?
- 2) Do you see public relations and image management as different?
 - a) Why or why not?
 - b) If distinguish, ask Q3 separately.
- 3) Who do you think should have responsibility for public relations and/or image management in your organization?
 - a) Do you think they are different? Why or why not?
- 4) How do you currently perceive the organization? What is your image of it?
- 5) How were these images formed?
- 6) What role did social/digital media play in your image formation?
- 7) How have you seen the image of the organization change?
- 8) What do you think caused that change?
- 9) Do you feel there is a discrepancy between the organization's current image and its desired future image?
- 10) Do you consider yourself a sport fan?
 - a) If so, are you a fan of the organization?
- 11) When someone praises the organization, does it feel like an insult or a compliment?
 - a) Why?
- 12) Do you have strong feelings about being a part of the city in which the team operates?
- 13) What role or purpose do you perceive the organization fulfills in your community?
 - a) What is its value to the community?
 - b) Does the organization share your personal values?
 - c) Does it share your company's values?
 - d) Do you think they value the community?
- 14) How do you rank the organization compared to others in the league, your city, and North America?
- 15) What makes it different from other organizations in the league, your city, North and North America?
- 16) What kind of direct and indirect interactions have you had with the organization?
 - a) Have others spoken to you about their interactions (media or individuals)?
 - b) If so, what influence has it had on you?
- 17) Do you feel the organization communicates well (i.e., assessable, uses common language, answers questions asked)?
 - a) Could you explain differences (if any) among these groups:
 - i) Coaches.
 - ii) Players.
 - iii) Staff.
 - iv) Owner/board.
 - v) Team president.
 - vi) In-arena.
 - vii) Online.
 - b) How have these information sources created the perceptions of the organization you hold?

- 18) Do you see the organization as logical (fair, consistent, rational, stable, progressive)?
- 19) Do you see the organization as trustworthy (competent, benevolent, dependable, having integrity)?
- 20) Do you express these concepts individually or together?
 - a) Why or why not?
 - b) If distinguish, ask Qi, ii separately.
 - i) How do they express these concepts (i.e., coaches, players, staff, owner/board, in-arena, online)?
 - ii) Could you explain differences (if any) among these groups?
- 21) What does legitimacy mean to you regarding sport organizations?
 - a) How do you think they achieve it?
 - i) Prompt if required; proper or appropriate actions within socially constructed norms, values, beliefs?
 - ii) If so who are your reference groups (e.g., other teams in leagues, in the city, media, community activists, government)?
- 22) Do you perceive the organization as delivering a quality product on the field (i.e., team success)?
- 23) Do you perceive the organization as delivering a quality product off the field?
- 24) What do you consider more important (rank): competition success, business success, community development, or community relations success?
 - a) How do you see the interrelationship among these factors?
 - b) Do you think it is important to have players/employees from the city/country the team operates in?

Appendix J – Codebook Phase 2 – Initial Coding

Initial Coding Internal Interview Nodes

(Initial Coding) Internal Interview and Document Nodes	Interviews / Documents Coded	Units of Meaning Coded
(Initial Coding) Internal Interview Nodes	39	473
Perceptions of Teams	28	80
67's	21	26
RedBlacks	21	24
Fury	21	23
Perceptions of OSEG	22	111
Brand Image Distinction	19	36
Fan Stakeholders	4	4
External Stakeholders	1	1
(Internal) Personal Perception of OSEG	17	20
(External) Personal Perceptions of OSEG	17	21
Desired Future Brand Image	13	34
Fury Future Brand Image	8	9
RedBlacks Future Image	8	9
67's Future Brand Image	7	7
Public Relations and Organizational Image Management	20	31
Organizational Role in Community	18	20
Organizational Communication	18	23
Organizational Legitimacy	18	27
Steps to Success in the Organization	18	18
What does public relations mean to you?	18	19
Responsibility for Public Relations and Image Management	17	18
Organization's Links to Community and Personal Values	17	21
Community Stakeholder Organizational Perspective	17	22
Perceptions of Stadium	17	22
Perceptions on Team and Stadium Rankings	16	16

Do you think it's important for players and employees to be from the city for the organization?	15	16
Image Management Challenges	14	16
Organizational Role and Organizational Purpose	7	8
Community's Value to the Organization	4	4
Organizational Identity	1	1

Initial Coding External Interviews

(Initial Coding) External Interviews	Interviews Coded	Units of Meaning Coded
(Initial Coding) External Interviews	38	537
Fans at Game	18	198
Fury	6	68
Brand Image Distinction	6	6
Perceptions of OSEG	6	6
Organizational Role in the Community	6	6
Organizational Communication	6	7
Organizational Legitimacy	6	6
Public Relations and Organizational Image Management	6	6
Stakeholder Perceptions	6	7
Perception Development (Social Media)	6	6
Do you think it's important to have local players/employees?	4	4
Future Brand Image Changes	4	4
Organizational Success	4	4
Team and Stadium Rankings	4	4
Perceptions of TD Place	2	2
Image Management Challenges	0	0
Perceptions of Teams	0	0
Fury	5	7
RedBlacks	2	2

67's	0	0
What does public relations mean to you?	0	0
Organizational and Community Value Linkages	0	0
Responsibility for Public Relations and Image Management	0	0
RedBlacks	6	67
Public Relations and Organizational Image Management	6	7
Brand Image Distinction	6	7
Organizational Role in Community	6	6
Stakeholder Perceptions	6	7
Organizational Legitimacy	6	6
Perceptions of OSEG	5	5
Organizational Communication	5	5
Future Brand Image Changes	4	4
Team and Stadium Rankings	4	4
Perception Development (Social Media)	4	4
Perceptions of TD Place	3	3
Do you think it's important to have local players/employees?	3	3
Organizational Success	2	2
What does public relations mean to you?	1	1
Responsibility for Public Relations and Image Management	1	1
Image Management Challenges	1	1
Organizational and Community Value Linkages	1	1
Perceptions of Teams	0	0
RedBlacks	6	9
67's	2	2
Fury	2	2
67's	6	63
Public Relations and Organizational Image Management	6	6
Perceptions of OSEG	6	7
Brand Image Distinction	6	6
Stakeholder Perceptions	6	6
Organizational Legitimacy	6	6

Organizational Success	6	6
Perception Development (Social Media)	6	6
Organizational Role in Community	5	5
Team and Stadium Rankings	5	5
Organizational Communication	5	6
Future Brand Image Changes	3	3
Perceptions of TD Place	1	1
Responsibility for Public Relations and Image Management	0	0
Image Management Challenges	0	0
Perceptions of Teams	0	0
67's	6	9
Fury	0	0
RedBlacks	0	0
Organizational Value and Community Linkages	0	0
Do you think it's important to have local players/employees?	0	0
Media	6	88
Perceptions of OSEG	5	6
What does public relations mean to you?	4	4
Public Relations and Organizational Image Management	4	4
Responsibility for Public Relations and Image Management	4	4
Perceptions of Teams	4	25
67's	4	6
RedBlacks	4	9
Fury	4	10
Organizational and Community Value Linkages	4	4
Stakeholder Perceptions	4	6
Organizational Legitimacy	4	4
Organizational Success	4	4
Perception Development (Social Media)	4	5
Product Quality	4	4
Brand Image Distinction	3	3
Team and Stadium Rankings	3	4

Organizational Communication	3	3
Do you think it's important to hire local players/employees?	3	3
Future Brand Image Changes	2	2
Organizational Role in Community	2	2
Perceptions of TD Place	1	1
Image Management Challenges	0	0
League or Sport Stakeholders	4	67
What does public relations mean to you?	4	4
Public Relations and Organizational Image Management	4	4
Perceptions of Teams	4	6
RedBlacks	2	2
Fury	2	4
Future Brand Image Changes	4	4
Team and Stadium Rankings	4	4
Stakeholder Perceptions	4	9
Organizational Legitimacy	4	4
Organizational Success	4	5
Do you think it's important to have local players/employees?	4	4
Perception Development	4	5
Organizational Role in Community	3	4
Organizational Communication	3	4
Responsibility for Public Relations and Image Management	2	2
Perceptions of OSEG	2	2
Brand Image Distinction	2	3
Organizational and Community Value Linkages	2	2
Product Quality	1	1
Image Management Challenges	0	0
Perceptions of TD Place	0	0
Community Sports Organizations	2	42
What does public relations mean to you?	2	2
Public Relations and Organizational Image Management	2	2
Perceptions of OSEG	2	5

Role of Social Media on Perception Development	2	2
Future Brand Image Changes	2	2
Value to Community	2	2
Organizational and Community Values Linkages	2	2
Organization and Team Rankings	2	2
Perceptions on Organizational Interaction	2	2
Organizational Communication	2	2
Community Stakeholder Perceptions	2	2
Organizational Legitimacy	2	2
Product Quality	2	2
Organizational Success	2	2
Do you think its important to have local players/employees for the team?	2	2
Perceptions about Fury	1	2
Personal Perceptions on Fury Image Change	1	1
Brand Distinction	1	1
Responsibility for Public Relations and Image Management	1	1
Perceptions about RedBlacks	1	3
Personal Perceptions on RedBlacks Image Change	1	1
Government	2	34
Public Relations and Organizational Image Management	2	2
Brand Image Distinction	2	2
Perception Development (Image)	2	3
Perception Development (Social Media)	2	2
Organizational Role in Community	2	2
Community and Organizational Value Linkages	2	2
Stakeholder Perceptions	2	4
Team and Stadium Rankings	2	2
Organizational Communication	2	3
Product Quality	2	2
Organizational Success	2	2
Do you think it's important to have local players/employees?	2	2

Perceptions of OSEG	1	2
Future Brand Image Changes	1	1
Organizational Legitimacy	1	1
What does public relations mean to you?	1	1
Responsibility for Public Relations and Image Management	1	1
Sponsor	2	33
What does public relations mean to you?	2	2
Public Relations and Organizational Image Management	2	2
Perceptions of OSEG	2	3
Future Brand Image Changes	2	2
Brand Image Distinction	2	2
Perception Development (Social Media)	2	2
Stakeholder Perceptions	2	4
Organizational Role in Community	2	2
Organizational and Community Value Linkages	2	2
Rankings of Teams and Stadium	2	3
Organizational Success	2	2
Organizational Communication	2	2
Organizational Legitimacy	2	2
Responsibility for Public Relations and Image Management	1	1
Perceptions of Teams	1	1
Perceptions of TD Place	1	1
Supporter Clubs	2	41
What does public relations mean to you?	2	2
Public Relations and Organizational Image Management	2	2
Responsibility for Public Relations and Image Management	2	2
Perceptions of OSEG	2	4
Perceptions of Teams	2	5
RedBlacks	2	2
67's	1	1
Fury	1	2
Brand Image Distinction	2	2

Perception Development (Social Media)	2	3
Organizational Communication	2	4
Stakeholder Perceptions	2	4
Organizational and Community Value Linkages	2	2
Team and Stadium Rankings	2	2
Organizational Legitimacy	2	2
Organizational Success	2	2
Do you think it's important to have local employees/players?	2	2
Future Brand Image Change	1	1
Organizational Role in the Community	1	1
Product Quality	1	1
Twitter Users	2	34
What does public relations mean to you	2	2
Public Relations and Organizational Image Management	2	2
Perceptions of Teams	2	6
RedBlacks	2	2
67's	1	2
Fury	1	2
Perception Development	2	3
Organizational Communication	2	3
Stakeholder Perceptions	2	4
Organizational and Community Value Linkages	2	2
Team and Stadium Rankings	2	2
Organizational Legitimacy	2	2
Organizational Success	2	2
Perceptions on OSEG	1	2
Do you think it's important to have local players/employees?	1	1
Future Brand Image Changes	1	1
Brand Image Distinction	1	1
Organizational Role in the Community	1	1

Appendix K – Codebook Phase 3 – Axial Coding

Axial Coding Internal Interviews

(Axial Coding) Internal Interviews and Documents	Interviews / Documents Coded	Units of Meaning Coded
Brand and Image Perspective	35	219
RedBlacks	24	37
67's	23	35
Fury	23	33
OSEG	20	46
Combined	19	42
Stadium	19	26
Identity	21	127
Community Activities	13	15
Community and Organizational Value Linkages	13	25
Fan Support and Local Ownership	12	16
Customer and Community Oriented	11	21
Kid Friendly	9	12
Tradition and History	8	11
Relationship Development	6	8
Professionalism	4	4
Family Oriented	4	5
Winning	3	3
Community Party	2	2
Trustworthy	2	2
Adult Oriented	1	1
Learning from the Past	1	1
Balancing Fan Needs	1	1
Brand and Image Development	18	85
Desired Future Brand Image	13	34
Distinguishing Brands	7	10

Targeted Marketing and Consistency	6	18
Perspective Driven	5	9
Customer and Stakeholder Focused	5	10
Learning from Mistakes	1	2
Transparency and Trust	1	2
Legitimacy	12	17
Legitimacy Dimensions	10	10
Leadership in Sports System	2	3
Following Procedures	2	2
Place for Community to Gather	1	1
Future Oriented	1	1

Axial Coding External Interviews

(Axial Coding) External Interviews	Interviews Coded	Units of Meaning Coded
Brand and Image Development	37	129
Perceptions of Teams	4	6
Perceptions of OSEG	2	5
Perceptions about Fury	1	2
Perceptions about RedBlacks	1	3
Perceptions on OSEG	1	2
Perceptions of TD Place	0	0
Brand and Image Distinction	34	36
Brand Image Distinction	2	2
Brand Distinction	1	1
Legitimacy	25	62
Credibility and Consistency	14	24
Relationship and Connection to Community and Stakeholders	9	14
Communication and Responsiveness	9	9
Transparency and Trust	8	9

Apparent Gaps	6	6
Identity	18	28
Customer and Community Oriented	14	17
Community and Organizational Value Linkages	4	6
Fan Support and Local Ownership	3	4
Tradition and History	1	1

Appendix L – Codebook Phase 4 - Reviewing Themes

Selective Coding Internal Interviews

(Selective Coding) Internal Interviews and Documents	Interviews Coded	Units of Meaning Coded
Internal Identity (Convergent Team Image Characteristics) Are Perceived as Customer-Focused, Communicative, and Transparent	21	118
Customer and Community Oriented	19	55
Communicative and Transparent	13	25
Tradition Building and Legacy	12	16
Legitimacy Develops from Communication, Relationship Development, Transparency, and Time	21	178
Communication and Accessibility to Community	18	38
Credibility and Consistency	18	56
Transparency Trust and Time	16	30
Collective Responsibility	14	14
Distinguishing Team Images is Perspective Driven	21	153
Brand and Image Perspective	19	83
Interrelated Team Images	15	60
Image Role in Organization	12	41

Selective Coding External Interviews

(Selective Coding) External Interviews	Interviews Coded	Units of Meaning Coded
Image identity Depends upon the External Perspective Context	34	36
Image Distinction	7	12
Legitimacy	25	62
Credibility and Consistency	14	24
Community Connection	9	14
Communication and Responsiveness	9	9

Trust Building	8	9
Identity (Convergent Team Image Characteristics)	18	28
Community focused	14	17
Communicative	4	6

Appendix M – Codebook Phase 5 – Selective Coding

Phase 5 - Selective Coding	Interviews Coded	Units of Meaning Coded
T1 - Internal Perspective	5	602
T1.1 - Internal Image	5	402
T1.1.1 - Brand and Image	5	63
T1.1.2 - Distinguishing Team Images	5	71
T1.1.3 - Interrelated Team Images	5	67
T1.1.4 - Convergent Team Image Characteristics	5	66
T1.1.5 - Perspective Driven	1	13
T1.1.6 - Image Role in the Organization	5	122
T1.2 - Internal Identity	5	200
T1.2.1 - Customer and Community Oriented Approach	5	73
T1.2.2 - Tradition Building and Legacy	4	19
T1.3 – Internal Legitimacy	4	26
T1.3.1 - Communication and Accessibility	5	54
T1.3.2 - Transparency, Trust, and Time	4	28
T2 - External Perspective	5	280
T2.1 - External Image	5	83
T2.1.1 - Organization is Community Focused and Communicative	5	83
T2.2 – Legitimacy	5	197
T2.2.1 - Communication and Responsiveness	5	61
T2.2.2 - Credibility and Consistency	4	33
T2.2.3 - Relationship and Connection to Community and Stakeholders	5	55
T2.2.4 - Trust Building	4	48

Appendix N: Codebook Phase 2 – Content Analysis

Open Coding

Descriptive Code	Twitter Feeds	Units of Meaning Coded
tonight	7	295
today	8	344
time	8	255
ticket	8	235
season	8	268
play	8	208
period	4	202
opener	8	254
home	8	268
good	8	313
goal	8	235
game	8	552
day	8	224

Appendix O²: Codebook Phase 3 – Categorization of Codes

Category of Codes	Category Definition	Tweets & Replies	Units of Meaning Coded
Supplication	Behaviors by the organization that portray an image of dependency and vulnerability for the purpose of soliciting assistance from others.	12	102
Social Validation	Also known as boasting.	14	773
Social Inclusion	Make them feel identified with the organization – parasocial, BIRGing and CORFing. Related to social identity theory.	16	874
Responses - Information Seeking		11	131
Responses - Fan Support and Support interactions	Fans express tweets as artifacts of support for team (BIRGing).	14	781
Responses - Fan Parasocial	Attempting parasocial dialogue.	12	554

² Codebook – Phase 3 – Categorization of Codes – Involved merging, renaming, distilling and clustering related coded into broader categories of codes to reconstruct the data into a framework that makes sense during further analysis while addressing the research questions and aims of the study.

Response - Fan Distancing from organization	Use of sarcasm, exaggerations, CORFing.	8	107
Response - Fan Complaints over experience or issue		7	122
Organizational Promotion	Behaviors that present the organization as being highly competent, effective, and successful.	14	2810
No Org Response	No organization response to direct questioning.	10	102
Ingratiation	Behaviors that are used by organizational actors to make the organization appear more attractive to others.	6	42
incomplete or unable to code		7	139
Exemplification	Behaviors that are used by the organization to project images of integrity, social responsibility, and moral worthiness; this tactic may also have a goal of seeking imitation by other entities.	11	671

Boasting	Proclaiming a positive link to a favorable other.	11	240
Apologies	Admissions of blameworthiness for a negative event, which include expressions of remorse and requests for a pardon.	8	65
Accounts	Explanations of a predicament-creating event which seek to minimize the apparent severity of the predicament.	16	458

Appendix P³: Codebook Phase 4 – Coding On

Coding on	Tweets & Replies	Units of Meaning Coded
Affiliation	13	544
other teams in league	2	2
other sport athlete or celebrity	7	16
other organization or event	10	74
media	13	228
league	6	52
higher league or NT	8	98
government	8	70
Competence or Success	9	120
on field	8	56
off field	7	62
Concern	6	27
glebe	3	13
fans	1	6
environmental or social	4	8
Demonstrating Part of Community	11	681
staff actions	6	18
owner actions	2	4
demonstrating part of community	11	641
acceptance	3	18
Engagement	13	217
trash talking other team	7	11
staff personal	5	9
sponsor	2	2
outside event manager	1	1
mascot	6	29

³ Codebook – Phase 4 – Reviewing themes involved breaking down the now reorganized codes in to sub-codes to better understand the meanings embedded therein.

humour	10	50
fan guest manage SM	1	3
donations to causes	3	5
corporate	11	57
athlete interaction	7	32
Game or Event Experience	12	208
family	2	5
Gratitude, Fan Recognition	12	102
HR	6	37
Humanizing the Organization	15	462
TD performer	2	12
RT athlete or coach or performer	9	100
promoting practice or camps or fan event	7	65
insider	8	87
Informational	9	132
transparency	2	4
Promoting Outside Validation	14	475
Promotion - Athletes	9	31
player or coach	4	13
player (2)	2	8
player	2	3
athlete	4	7
Promotion - Contest or Giveaway	10	96
promo winner announced	6	31
contest or giveaway promo	10	65
Promotion - Landsdowne	6	90
Landsdowne and stadium	6	90
Promotion - Other	8	69
promoting other SM or media platforms	8	65
personal promo	1	1
mascot	2	3

Promotion - Sales or Sponsor	11	206
sponsor	10	132
sales message	9	71
draft kings	1	3
Promotion - TD Event	8	208
TD event	8	208
Promotion - Team	12	1254
tradition	7	25
team announcements	1	3
team	9	89
RedBlacks	4	60
publicity stunt	3	7
marketing and promotion	1	5
in game or event updates	8	707
game summary or highlights	7	180
game	3	8
fury	2	127
distiction	2	6
67's	2	37
Promotion Cross Team	11	381
cross team promoting	9	117
cross TD	2	156
cross mascot	5	82
cross athlete	8	26
responses	16	2409
positive sentiment	16	1607
negative sentiment	12	324
information seeking	15	478

Appendix Q⁴: Codebook Phase 5 - Data Reduction/Consolidation

Table Q1

Open Coding Themes

Image Communication Themes (Aggregate)	Total Tweets and Organizational Retweets	Total Replies	Total Retweets of Organizational Tweets and Retweets
Total	3905	1087	39720
Affiliation	502	122	7180
Government	69	17	1163
League, Higher League, or National Team	150	33	3158
Media	214	58	2135
Other Organization or Event	72	18	1406
Outside Sport Athlete or Celebrity	15	1	218
Competence or Success	112	41	894
Off Field	58	24	303
On Field	55	17	598
Demonstrating part of Community	660	129	11154
Acceptance	630	117	10899
School/Community Sport	623	114	10863
Concern Miscellaneous	49	14	392
Owner/Staff	25	12	200
Engagement	185	99	1045
Corporate/Athlete Corporate/Sponsor	112	56	523
Mascot	22	14	27
Outside Event Talent/Organization	33	22	267
Staff	8	5	75
Game or Event Experience	200	64	1426
Fan Game or Event Experience	199	64	1421

⁴ Codebook – Phase 5 – Data Reduction/Consolidation involved conceptually mapping and collapsing content categories into a broader thematic framework.

Exclusive Family Focus	21	3	16
Gratitude/Fan Recognition	97	34	550
Humanizing the Organization	456	201	4271
School and Community Visits from Player and Coaches Only	345	143	3067
OSEG Staff or Human Resources	37	16	212
Insider	147	48	1135
RT Athlete, Coach, or TD Performer	91	74	1210
Informational	131	37	1156
Promoting Outside Validation	385	175	1878
Promotion/Information Sharing	1986	459	16968
Promotion - Athletes	29	12	156
Promotion - Contest	94	18	755
Promotion - Other	69	21	308
Promotion - TD Event	202	35	5746
Promotion - Team	1024	203	5958

Appendix R: Informed Consent Form

Letter of Consent**Université d'Ottawa**

Faculté des sciences de la
santé

École des sciences de
l'activité physique

University of Ottawa

Faculty of Health Sciences

School of Human Kinetics

Title of the study: The Influence of Social Media in Professional Sport Image Management: A Public Relations Approach

Principal Investigator: Mark Dottori, Doctoral Candidate, University of Ottawa, School of Human Kinetics

Supervisors: Dr. Benoit Séguin, University of Ottawa, School of Human Kinetics and Dr. Norm O'Reilly, Ohio University

Invitation to Participate: You are invited to participate in the abovementioned research study conducted by Mark Dottori as part of his doctoral dissertation.

Purpose of the Study: The study is planned to address some of the pivotal issues that confront today's development of communications and image management using the context of sport. Specifically, the objective of this study is to examine the influence of social media on the relationship between organizational identity and organizational image, measured through legitimacy, and the determination of the role of sport public relations (SPR) in overall image management.

Participation: As an employees or important external stakeholder to the sport organization under investigation, you are invited to share your current views and opinions on the perceived images of the organization, how they were formed, and what you think they should be. Your participation in the study will be highly valuable. The interview will take approximately 45 minutes of your time and, with your permission, the interview will be tape-recorded to facilitate accurate collection of the information. You do not have to answer to any questions that you do not wish to respond to or that make you feel uncomfortable. You may also end the interview at any time. If you wish to participate in this study, please let me know at your earliest convenience. I will be sending you a notice of reminder in two weeks' time. Please note that the interview will be audio-recorded and later transcribed.

Benefits: The outcome of the study is also expected to help the organization empirically understand and measure the value and significance of its image and the effects of social media on today's sport marketing communication practice. This will help the organization serve the community in which it operates through aiding it design an informed business strategy to meet community

and organizational expectations, enabling the realization of an effective use of image and social media as an effective public relations and marketing tool.

the investigator that you do not wish for it to be used, in which case it will be destroyed. This study is being conducted with the support of the organization, but independently through the researcher and the University of Ottawa, thus there is no consequence to your decision to participate, or not to participate in the study.

Confidentiality and Anonymity: The information that you will share will remain strictly confidential and will be used solely for the purposes of this research. Only I, the investigator, and the thesis supervisory committee will have access to your data/responses. Your answers may be used verbatim in presentations and publications but neither you (nor your organization) will be identified. Results will be published in pooled (aggregate) format. Anonymity is guaranteed since you are not being asked to provide your name or any personal identifying information.

Conservation of Data: All data and documents will be separately stored in a locked filing cabinet and a password protected computer by both the researcher and the research co-supervisors, that can only be accessed by the researcher and his supervisors. Individual files will also be password protected. Any hard copy documents will be scanned and saved on an external password protected hard disk and the hard copy will be destroyed immediately after. Data will be filed immediately following the investigator's doctoral thesis defense for a period of five (5) years, at which time it will be destroyed.

Voluntary Participation: You are under no obligation to participate in this study, and if you do, you have the right to withdraw at any time. If you choose to participate, you may refuse to answer any questions that you do not wish to answer. Should you withdraw from the study after having signed the consent form, data collected up until that moment will be destroyed, unless permission to use it is granted by you. You will also have the opportunity to review the transcripts of the interview for accuracy.

Information about the Study Results: The results will be available to the interviewee on request by email to the investigator.

If you have any questions or require more information about the study itself, you may contact the investigator himself with the contact information mentioned herein. To proceed, once you have expressed your interest to me, I will contact you to confirm your participation and to discuss the consent form and the time of your interview.

If you have any questions with regards to the ethical conduct of this study, you may contact the University of Ottawa's Protocol Officer for Ethics in Research (Tabaret Hall, 550 Cumberland Street, Room 154, Ottawa, ON K1N 6N5, tel.: (613) 562-5387 or ethics@uottawa.ca.)

Please keep this document for your records.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Mark Dottori

Doctoral Candidate

Appendix S: Individual Twitter Analysis Tables

Table S1

Twitter Analysis for Ottawa 67's & Riley (Mascot)

Ottawa 67s & Riley (Mascot)	Total Tweets and Organizational Retweets	Total Replies	Total Retweets of Organizational Tweets	% of Total Tweets and Organizational Retweets Replied	Average times an Organizational Tweet or Retweet Retweeted
Affiliation	90	16	2237	0.178	24.86
Competence/Success	23	6	309	0.261	13.43
Community Engagement	188	35	780	0.186	4.15
Direct Engagement	53	21	238	0.396	4.49
Game or Event Experience	29	6	67	0.207	2.31
Gratitude/Fan Recognition	23	5	66	0.217	2.87
Humanizing the Organization	59	14	303	0.237	5.14
Informational	19	4	158	0.211	8.32
Social Validation	51	12	635	0.235	12.45
Promotion/Information Sharing	319	77	1602	0.241	5.02
Total	854	196	6395	0.230	7.49

Table S2

Twitter Analysis for Ottawa Fury & Sparky (Mascot)

Ottawa Fury & Sparky (Mascot)	Total Tweets and Organizational Retweets	Total Replies	Total Retweets of Organizational Tweets	% of Total Tweets and Organizational Retweets Replied	Average times an Organizational Tweet or Retweet Retweeted
Affiliation	150	26	1471	0.173	9.81
Competence/Success	21	7	117	0.333	5.57
Community Engagement	176	29	894	0.165	5.08
Direct Engagement	51	23	231	0.451	4.53
Game or Event Experience	61	13	215	0.213	3.52
Gratitude/Fan Recognition	36	12	140	0.333	3.89
Humanizing the Organization	116	45	713	0.388	6.15
Informational	27	8	208	0.296	7.70
Social Validation	87	25	510	0.287	5.86
Promotion/Information Sharing	706	90	2060	0.127	2.92
Total	1431	278	6559	0.194	4.58

Table S3

Twitter Analysis Ottawa RedBlacks and Big Joe (Mascot)

Ottawa RedBlacks and Big Joe (Mascot)	Total Tweets and Organizational Retweets	Total Replies	Total Retweets of Organizational Tweets	% of Total Tweets and Organizational Retweets Replied	Average times an Organizational Tweet or Retweet Retweeted
Affiliation	168	52	3085	0.310	18.36
Competence/Success	21	13	193	0.619	9.19
Community Engagement	200	43	8814	0.215	44.07
Direct Engagement	43	35	269	0.814	6.26
Game or Event Experience	59	32	1399	0.542	23.71
Gratitude/Fan Recognition	27	13	281	0.481	10.41
Humanizing the Organization	161	95	2029	0.590	12.60
Informational	19	8	111	0.421	5.84
Social Validation	116	85	634	0.733	5.47
Promotion/Information Sharing	406	160	4068	0.394	10.02
Total	1220	536	20883	0.439	17.12

Table S4

Twitter Analysis for TD Place

TD Place	Total Tweets and Organizational Retweets	Total Replies	Total Retweets of Organizational Tweets	% of Total Tweets and Organizational Retweets Replied	Average times an Organizational Tweet or Retweet Retweeted
Affiliation	41	13	995	0.317	24.27
Competence/Success	0	0	0	0.000	0.00
Community Engagement	20	2	163	0.100	8.15
Direct Engagement	11	5	19	0.455	1.73
Game or Event Experience	42	11	145	0.262	3.45
Gratitude/Fan Recognition	10	4	69	0.400	6.90
Humanizing the Organization	50	17	1135	0.340	22.70
Informational	51	8	432	0.157	8.47
Social Validation	95	43	301	0.453	3.17
Promotion/Information Sharing	439	88	8402	0.200	19.14
Total	759	191	11661	0.252	15.36

Table S5

Twitter Analysis for OSEG

OSEG	Total Tweets and Organizational Retweets	Total Replies	Total Retweets of Organizational Tweets	% of Total Tweets and Organizational Retweets Replied	Average times an Organizational Tweet or Retweet Retweeted
Affiliation	53	15	304	0.283	5.74
Competence/Success	47	15	254	0.319	5.40
Community Engagement	76	20	924	0.263	12.16
Direct Engagement	27	15	270	0.556	10.00
Game or Event Experience	9	2	27	0.222	3.00
Gratitude/Fan Recognition	1	0	0	0.000	0.00
Humanizing the Organization	70	30	384	0.429	5.49
Informational	15	9	108	0.600	7.20
Social Validation	36	10	201	0.278	5.58
Promotion/Information Sharing	116	44	946	0.379	8.16
Total	450	160	3418	0.356	7.60

Table S6

Twitter Analysis for Ottawa 67's and Riley (Mascot) With Replies

Ottawa 67's and Riley (Mascot)	Organizational Retweets and Replies	Positive Sentiment	% Positive Sentiment	Negative Sentiment	% Negative Sentiment	Information Seeking (neutral)	% Information Seeking
Affiliation	215	21	0.098	0	0.000	0	0.000
Competence/Success	121	11	0.091	0	0.000	0	0.000
Community Engagement	180	55	0.306	0	0.000	3	0.017
Direct Engagement	99	51	0.515	0	0.000	0	0.000
Game or Event Experience	23	9	0.391	0	0.000	0	0.000
Gratitude/Fan Recognition	14	3	0.214	0	0.000	0	0.000
Humanizing the Organization	48	27	0.563	1	0.021	1	0.021
Informational	41	12	0.293	0	0.000	0	0.000
Social Validation	70	24	0.343	0	0.000	0	0.000
Promotion/Information Sharing	491	147	0.299	3	0.006	10	0.020
Total	1302	360	0.276	4	0.003	14	0.011

Table S7

Twitter Analysis for Ottawa Fury and Sparky (Mascot) With Replies

Ottawa Fury and Sparky (Mascot)	Organizational Retweets and Replies	Positive Sentiment	% Positive Sentiment	Negative Sentiment	% Negative Sentiment	Information Seeking (neutral)	% Information Seeking
Affiliation	141	41	0.291	0	0.000	2	0.014
Competence/Success	16	10	0.625	0	0.000	0	0.000
Community Engagement	115	35	0.304	0	0.000	1	0.009
Direct Engagement	132	65	0.492	0	0.000	2	0.015
Game or Event Experience	58	23	0.397	5	0.086	0	0.000
Gratitude/Fan Recognition	42	24	0.571	1	0.024	0	0.000
Humanizing the Organization	259	136	0.525	0	0.000	2	0.008
Informational	52	11	0.212	6	0.115	10	0.192
Social Validation	103	29	0.282	0	0.000	3	0.029
Promotion/Information Sharing	318	151	0.475	30	0.094	20	0.063
Total	1236	525	0.425	42	0.034	40	0.032

Table S8

Twitter Analysis for RedBlacks and Big Joe (Mascot) With Replies

REDBLACKS and Big Joe (Mascot)	Organizational Retweets and Replies	Positive Sentiment	% Positive Sentiment	Negative Sentiment	% Negative Sentiment	Information Seeking (neutral)	% Information Seeking
Affiliation	258	85	0.329	2	0.008	4	0.016
Competence/Success	36	18	0.500	4	0.111	0	0.000
Community Engagement	166	55	0.331	0	0.000	1	0.006
Direct Engagement	417	205	0.492	0	0.000	6	0.014
Game or Event Experience	105	52	0.495	5	0.048	10	0.095
Gratitude/Fan Recognition	64	32	0.500	3	0.047	0	0.000
Humanizing the Organization	501	281	0.561	2	0.004	7	0.014
Informational	13	8	0.615	0	0.000	3	0.231
Social Validation	235	111	0.472	0	0.000	0	0.000
Promotion/Information Sharing	762	376	0.493	27	0.035	16	0.021
Total	2557	1223	0.478	43	0.017	47	0.018

Table S9

Twitter Analysis for TD Place With Replies

TD Place	Organizational Retweets and Replies	Positive Sentiment	% Positive Sentiment	Negative Sentiment	% Negative Sentiment	Information Seeking (neutral)	% Information Seeking
Affiliation	92	16	0.174	11	0.120	2	0.022
Competence/Success	0	0	0.000	0	0.000	0	0.000
Community Engagement	16	2	0.125	0	0.000	1	0.063
Direct Engagement	10	9	0.900	0	0.000	1	0.100
Game or Event Experience	25	9	0.360	2	0.080	2	0.080
Gratitude/Fan Recognition	9	5	0.556	3	0.333	0	0.000
Humanizing the Organization	69	29	0.420	0	0.000	2	0.029
Informational	58	12	0.207	14	0.241	2	0.034
Social Validation	167	58	0.347	1	0.006	0	0.000
Promotion/Information Sharing	413	165	0.400	19	0.046	29	0.070
Total	859	305	0.355	50	0.058	39	0.045

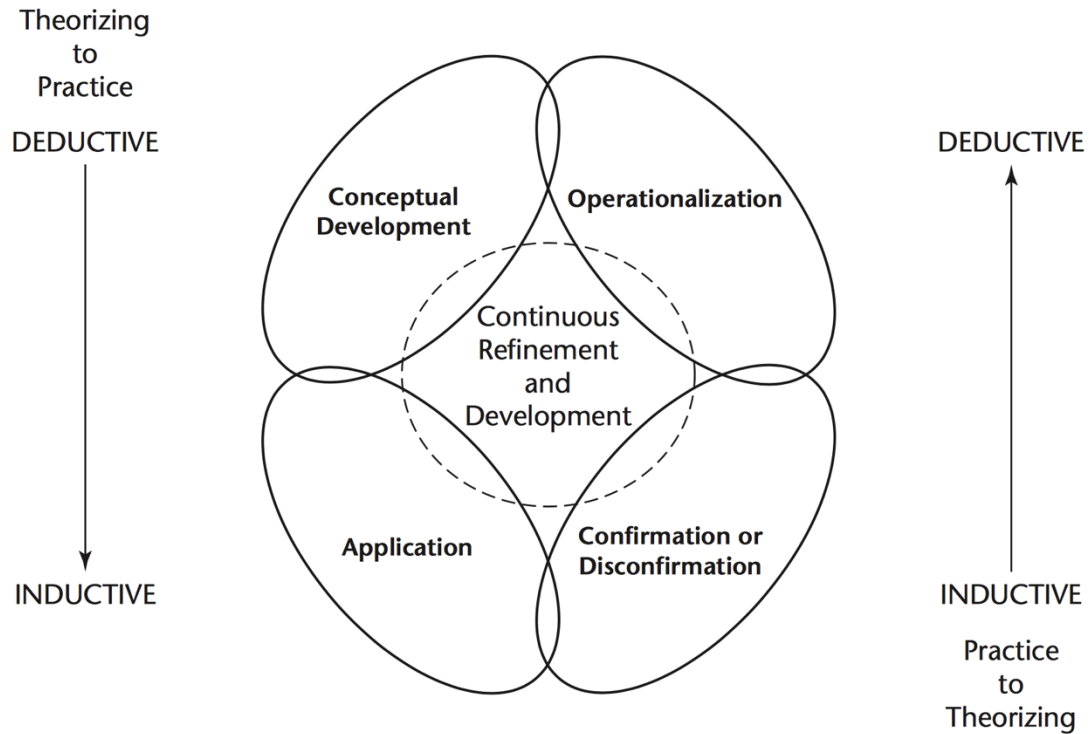
Table S10

Twitter Analysis for OSEG Corporate With Replies

OSEG Corporate	Organizational Retweets and Replies	Positive Sentiment	% Positive Sentiment	Negative Sentiment	% Negative Sentiment	Information Seeking (neutral)	% Information Seeking
Affiliation	67	19	0.284	5	0.075	6	0.090
Competence/Success	90	30	0.333	5	0.056	2	0.022
Community Engagement	83	40	0.482	3	0.036	2	0.024
Direct Engagement	123	77	0.626	2	0.016	7	0.057
Game or Event Experience	8	2	0.250	0	0.000	0	0.000
Gratitude/Fan Recognition	0	0	0.000	0	0.000	0	0.000
Humanizing the Organization	123	49	0.398	5	0.041	14	0.114
Informational	43	18	0.419	3	0.070	2	0.047
Social Validation	52	16	0.308	2	0.038	2	0.038
Promotion/Information Sharing	230	96	0.417	36	0.157	18	0.078
Total	819	347	0.424	61	0.074	53	0.065

Appendix T: General Method of Theory-Building Research in Applied Disciplines
(Lynham, 2002, p. 231)

The environment in which we live, observe, and experience the world.



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