Social Media and Live Streaming: Reaching and Engaging Fans?

The Case of Facebook Live and the Queensland Maroons

A thesis presented in fulfilment of the requirements for

a PhD in Sport and Exercise

At Massey University, Palmerston North, New Zealand

Sarah Wymer

2019

ABSTRACT

Social media has profoundly changed the way sport organisations communicate with their fans by encouraging consumers to interact directly with event and player activity. While there has been an abundance of research examining the broad effects of social media on sport organisations, there has been a paucity to date around the usage of live streaming. As such, this research explores the case of one elite sport organisation, the Queensland Maroons, and how live-streaming was incorporated into their Facebook page by using Facebook Live over the entire 2017 and 2018 State of Origin seasons. This study sought to uncover the positioning of the live streaming component within the organisation's overall social media strategy and how live-streaming may impact fan engagement by using a multi-method approach involving semi-structured interviews with the organisation's social media managers, a content analysis of related Facebook posts and a thematic analysis of fan responses. The findings revealed that live streaming may be disruptive to a conventional social media strategy, as not all live posts are 'engaging' by design. However, live streaming can be an engaging proposition when it provides exclusive content that allows the fan to experience authentic insights into the rituals and traditions of their favourite sport team and athletes in 'real-time'. Furthermore, live streaming may provide an immersive experience, and encourage fan-to-fan interaction and fan-to-sport organisation interaction, resulting in a sense of community and fan engagement. Three unique management challenges were identified: (1) access to athletes; (2) live-streaming resourcing and (3) understanding and determining 'engaging' live streams. Consequently, a conceptual model was formed to assist sport organisations to provide a strategic, structured approach to social media, of which live streaming can be a critical, useful component. It provides seven categories of live videos on a scale of engagement and ways in which fans may respond to these posts to assist sport managers to plan specific content to encourage interaction and fan engagement.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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LIST OF KEY TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Algorithm – The process that Facebook ranks an individual user's posts that are displayed on the newsfeed (see **newsfeed**) based on how likely the user will interact with specific content.

BIPG – *Basking in Past Glory*. When a sport team is not winning, a fan may focus on previous success of the team or an individual athlete to protect their relationship with the team through nostalgic feelings.

BIRF – *Basking in spite of Reflected Failure.* When a sport team is not winning, a fan may highlight other positive aspects of their relationship with the team to manage their image with the desire of avoiding the notion of being a 'fair-weather-fan'.

BIRG – *Basking in Reflected Glory.* An individual may attempt to improve their self-esteem and self-worth through basking in a sport team's triumphs and broadcasting their association with the team when the team is successful.

CORF – *Cutting off Reflected Failure.* An individual may disassociate themselves from a sport team when they are not successful as they do not want their own reputation to be reflected in the team's failure.

Engagement – This research refers to engagement, specifically Facebook engagement, in terms of an individual's reactions, shares, and comments on a Facebook post.

Facebook Live – Facebook Live was introduced in 2016 to allow Facebook users the ability to stream and interact with viewers in real time.

Fan – This research refers to fan as an individual who has 'liked' the official Queensland Maroons Facebook fan page and it is assumed is a supporter of the Queensland Maroons.

Fan Engagement – The manner in which a sport team or organisation builds an intense and deeply-rooted connection with a fan based on providing an individualised fan experience to allow fans to feel engaged with the team or organisation.

Live Video – This research refers to live video as a video that is shared on a social media platform such as Facebook via real time transmission.

Native Video - This research defines a native video as a video that is created for the purpose of sharing to Facebook in a recorded and edited format.

Newsfeed - The Facebook newsfeed is a list of updates on an individual's Facebook home page displaying updates from an individual's friends and liked pages. The algorithm (see **algorithm**) determines which posts are displayed on the newsfeed.

QRL – *Queensland Rugby League.* The governing body for Rugby League in Queensland, Australia, which manages the Queensland Maroons Rugby League team (see **Queensland Maroons**).

Queensland Maroons – A representative Rugby League team which participates in the annual best of three series against the New South Wales Blues.

Reach – This research refers to reach in relation to Facebook as the number of fans (see **fan**) or users (see **user**) that have viewed a Facebook post.

RM – *Relationship Marketing.* Customer marketing that is long term focused, concentrating on building and maintaining relationships with customers creating customer loyalty and customer engagement rather than short term tactics such as sales.

SM – *Social Media.* Web based communication platforms that allow users to communicate with each other by sharing and consuming information.

SMM – *Social Media Marketing.* This research refers to social media marketing in the form of the use of social media tools (Facebook) to promote the QRL and the Queensland Maroons.

User – For the purpose of this research, a user is an individual who engages (see **engagement**) with content on the Queensland Maroons Facebook page but is not a fan.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

Understanding how social media (SM) can be used to develop relationships and enhance engagement with fans has become increasingly important for sport organisations. SM allows fans to have access to their favourite athletes and teams instantaneously and may promote two-way conversations between fans and the sport organisation and also aid in the development of a community. SM may be a great tool for sport organisations to connect with fans as they may use platforms including Facebook, Twitter and Instagram to interact and share information with other fans and the sport organisation. Furthermore, SM may be used by athletes to post about their day, creating a sense of accessibility and developing fan engagement. Consequently, the use of SM in sport and by sport organisations has become a growing topic of academic concern. However, while there has been a growing number of studies examining how and why sport organisations are using SM, to date there is a dearth of research on how sport organisations have used live-streaming platforms as a means of marketing and fan engagement.

This chapter provides initial detail of the nature and context for this research, which focuses on the area of relationship marketing and the use of social media and Facebook Live by the Queensland Maroons Rugby League Team in 2017 and 2018. My motivation for undertaking the research is then explored and the specific aims, objectives and research questions are presented. Finally, it concludes with a brief overview of the thesis.

1.1 NATURE OF THE RESEARCH

1.1.1 Relationship Marketing

Organisations are increasingly focusing their marketing efforts beyond creating a single exchange in building long-term relationships with their customers (Kotler, Kartajaya, Setiawan, & Vandercammen, 2012). It has been suggested that RM represents a paradigm shift from a transactional to a relationship orientation (Gronroos, 1994, 1996; Veloutsou, Saren, & Tzokas, 2003). While transactional marketing is focused on short term thinking with the business deal being the start and end of the current transaction, RM is focused on a long-term marketing approach, where the emphasis is on future transactions (Kumar, Bohling, & Ladda, 2003). Berry (1983) was the first to provide a formal description of the term RM as a marketing effort aimed at "attracting, maintaining and – in multiservice organisations – enhancing customer relationships" (p. 25). Signalling the perhaps contentious nature of RM, there are now as many as 50 published definitions of RM (Baker & Hart, 2016). Harker (1999) believes the definition presented by Grönroos (1994; 1995) is the 'best' in terms of its coverage of the underlying conceptualisations of relationship marketing.

> Relationship marketing is to identify and establish, maintain and enhance and when necessary also to terminate relationships with customers and other stakeholders, at a profit, so that the objectives of all parties are met, and that this is done by a mutual exchange and fulfilment of promises (Harker, 1999, p. 16).

That said, scholars agree that RM is related to building a collaborative relationship, building on communication and interaction between organisations and their stakeholders (Grönroos, 2004), and is characterised by the attraction, development, and retention of customers (Bee & Kahle, 2006). Williams and Chinn (2010) suggest that in order to secure long-term

satisfaction with customers, organisations need to communicate, interact, and engage in two-way dialogue with customers on an ongoing basis. This mutual dialogue between the customer and the organisation allows businesses to develop increased consumer loyalty, reduce marketing costs and increase profitability (Pepper & Rogers, 2004). With this in mind, it has been suggested that in sport, SM is an ideal avenue to assist organisations achieve RM goals (Abeza, O'Reilly, & Reid, 2013).

1.1.2 Relationship Marketing in Sport

The professional sport industry has a service industry aspect where customer orientation is essential, as involvement of customers with the team they support is very high (Sista, 2006). For the purpose of this research, a relationship is defined as the way in which a sport fan and the sport organisation are connected. In this research, a fan relates to an individual at any stage of the Psychological Continuum model (PCM) (Funk & James, 2001). The PCM is a conceptual framework that describes four stages; awareness, attraction, attachment and allegiance to understand how sport fans relationships with a sport organisation or event develops with relevant behaviours such as viewing or consuming sport. Awareness is the first stage, where an individual is aware the team exists (i.e. I know who the Queensland Maroons are); in the attraction stage, the individual has a favourite sport team (i.e. my favourite State of Origin team is the Queensland Maroons); in the attachment stage, the individual has an emotional connection to a sport team (i.e. I am a Queensland Maroons fan); and in the allegiance stage, the individual's connection to the sport team has a greater impact on behaviour (i.e. I live for the Queensland Maroons). Throughout this research, relationship is referred to any form of connection between the Queensland Maroons and the fan.

The recognition that sport may benefit from a RM approach is well accepted, as is the notion of referring to sport fans as customers (Cohen, 1996). As Hunt, Bristol and Bashaw (1999) state, a sport fan is an enthusiastic consumer who is motivated to engage in behaviour related to sport. In most cases, sport involves some type of RM (Bee & Kahle, 2006; Williams & Chinn, 2010). RM in professional sport is not confined to fans, but also involves interrelationships between stakeholders (e.g. sponsors, government organisations, facility management) where relationships are dependent on successful management (Bee & Kahle, 2006). A successful RM approach goes beyond the current short-term ticket sales and focuses on developing meaningful and beneficial relationships that are proactive, interactive and enduring (Kim & Trail, 2011). Therefore, it is an important aspect of sport management, as sport organisations that develop strong relationships with their fans can enhance and maintain fan psychological attachment to the team, creating a positive attitude towards the team. (Stavros, Pope and Winzar, 2008).

1.1.3 Fan Engagement

A RM strategy that focuses on fan engagement is important for professional sport teams. Giorgio (2016) suggests "home field advantage is no longer simply packing a stadium or arena with your best fans. It's about engaging distinct groups of fans inside and outside the game venue, during winning and 'rebuilding' seasons, 365 days a year" (para. 1). A construct of RM, fan engagement occurs when a sport organisation builds an intense and deeply rooted connection with a fan base. Fan engagement can be defined as:

> A growth strategy of long-term relationship management between sports institution and fan groups, where institutions facilitate fans in self-expression and in-group acceptance, using both modern online and offline technologies, with the goal of

creating social value for fans, which can be transformed into profit optimisation
(Schnater, 2016, para.10).

Walker, Sartore and Taylor (2009) suggest that sport organisations that engage in active communication with fans may create a sense of involvement and indirectly enhance commitment and trust. Therefore, it is proposed that when reciprocal commitment is established, and interactivity occurs, fan engagement may increase (Sawhney, Verona & Prandelli, 2005). The development of social media has influenced how sport organisations communicate and interact with fans. Sport organisations are focusing attention on developing fan engagement strategies through SM as a means to relate to their fans (Gummerus, Liljander, Weman, & Pihlström, 2012) and to provide a place for fans to interact with their favourite athletes, teams and other fans (Pegoraro & Jinnah, 2012). Vale and Fernandes (2018) highlighted the need to further understand fan engagement through social media to increase the relationships between teams and fans.

1.1.4 Social Media

While the terms 'social media' and 'social networks' are commonly used interchangeably, there are notable key differences between the two terms. Social media are a way to transmit or share information with a broad audience, while social networking is an act of engagement. Facebook can be described as a 'whole package platform' as it is considered both social media (tools) and social networking (a way to engage). Social Media (SM) are defined as "a group of internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content" (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p. 61). In the sport industry, the magnitude of SM is driven by various stakeholders such as professional sport teams, leagues, professional athletes,

professional sporting events, and sport fans (Abeza, O'Reilly, Seguin, & Nzindukiyimana, 2017). SM have transformed the way in which relationships between fans and sport organisations are developed and maintained. Essentially, presenting an opportunity for sport organisations to reach almost every customer in real time (Stavros, Meng, Westberg, & Farrelly, 2014), to engage in dialogue with them, and to create, in due course, a mutually valued product (Abeza & O'Reilly, 2014).

Although Newman, Peck, and Wilhide (2013) state that SM enable consumers to watch and share video and photos, read and write blogs, post on social networking sites and have online conversations. The vast and dynamic SM landscape is constantly evolving and changing. In 2008, Brian Solis debuted the Conversation Prism which was designed as a visual map of the relevant conversational networks at the time and organised by how people used each network (Solis & Thomas, 2018). The Conversation Prism is currently at version 5, which has seen the removal of 84 companies, the addition of 141 companies and the creation of new categories to understand how people are using these networks. The Conversation Prism represents an ongoing exploration to help visualise and organise the massive, ever-changing social media landscape as platforms appear, disappear, acquire each other, and get renamed. However, despite continuous changes, SM networks are so well established now that there is general consensus on the five 'core' SM networking platforms used for benchmarking and research purposes – Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, LinkedIn, and Twitter (Watson, 2018).

1.1.5   Social Media Marketing

Moretti and Tuan (2014) believe that Social Media Marketing (SMM) is an evolutionary factor of Relationship Marketing. Moretti and Tuan (2014) define SMM as "the process that empowers individuals … by gaining attention through SM sites and tapping into a larger

community that may not have been available via traditional communication channels" (p. 124). While RM addresses each customer as an individual, which is distinctly epitomised in the expression 'one-to-one-marketing' (Peppers, Rogers, & Dorf, 1998; Newall 2000), Moretti and Tuan (2014) argue that in the case of SMM the meaning of relationship is quite different. Instead of managing customers, the role of the organisations is to facilitate collaborative experiences and dialogues valued by customers (Heller Baird & Parasnis, 2011). The primary objective of SMM is to speed up communication and to increase direct interaction, dialogue and participation across organisations and various stakeholders (Colleoni, 2013).

SMM represents a shift in marketing providing more of an 'experience economy' with consumers no longer wanting to be sold products but becoming more receptive to being sold an experience. Karamian, Nadoushan, and Nadoushan (2015) suggest that the most popular brands in SM post less about products and focus more on creating content that help customers get to know the people and personality of their organisation. The focus on experiences rather than selling products is important for organisations to consider as, Heller Baird and Parasnis (2011) suggest that for organisations to successfully exploit the potential of SM, they must design experiences that deliver tangible value in exchange for customer's time and attention. As SM empowers consumers, it provides opportunities for organisations to allow marketers to communicate directly to a specific audience (Miller & Lammas, 2010). Therefore, organisations have to develop a new mindset involving expanding their content to gain reach, intimacy and engagement (Hanna, Rohm, & Crittenden 2011; Kavada & Treré, 2019). Importantly, Hutter, Hautz, Dennhardt, and Füller (2013) note that engagement of SM users leads to increased brand awareness and influences the purchasing decisions of consumers. However, despite the growth of SMM, certain issues remain unresolved. Organisations are

still unsure of how to measure the impact of their social media strategy and its contribution to the bottom line, how to measure engagement, and how to use SM to build and sustain value-creating relationships with their customers (Achen, Lebel & Clavio, 2017).

1.1.6   Facebook Live

Social live broadcasting platform products such as Facebook Live are distinct from native video as they allow users to broadcast themselves (most commonly with a mobile device) and are unique as consumption is driven in real-time. This is achieved through integration with a social network, such as Facebook, which notifies online users of the broadcast. Van Es (2016) states "liveness is a persistent and much-debated concept in media studies. Until recently, it was associated primarily with broadcast media, and television. However, the emergence of social media has brought new forms of liveness into effect" (p. 5).

Raman, Tyson and Sastry (2018) attempt to define the unique quality of 'liveness' as the ability for viewers and broadcasters to interact through the social network in real-time in the form of likes, shares and comments. This view is echoed by Fietkiewicza and Scheibe (2017) who stated, "in contrast to many other social media, SLSSs [Social Live Streaming Services] are synchronous, meaning that all user-activities happen at the same time" (p. 93). The shared experience for users is a unique product of 'liveness' that may allow them to feel a sense of connection through a shared experience, which in turn may encourage engagement with other viewers and the broadcasters. Whilst there are a number of SLSS, this research focuses on Facebook Live. The Yellow Social Media Report by Sensis (2018) reports that Facebook is the most popular social network in Australia with 15 million monthly active users (MAU). Furthermore, 95% of Australians who use SM sites report having an active account on Facebook and Facebook is reported to be used by 90% of businesses. Facebook Live was

chosen for this research over other SM live streaming platforms due to the greater reach of Facebook in comparison to other social network sites with reported lower MAU (Sensis, 2018); Instagram (9 million), Snapchat (6.4 million), Twitter (4.7 million), and LinkedIn (4.5 million). An evolving tool provided by social media platforms is giving users the ability to 'live stream'. Live video streaming can be described as "the ability to broadcast video to a remote audience in the instant that it is captured" (Juhlin, Engstrom, & Reponen, 2010, p. 2). SM platforms typically offer users the ability to capture video from mobile devices or external cameras and share them in real time with an online community. Rein and Venturini (2018) state that interactions occur mainly through text-based chats during live video where viewers can communicate with the broadcaster and with other viewers. The combination of real-time video and chat may promote high levels of engagement and constitutes a key characteristic of social live streaming.

Facebook introduced their 'live stream' tool to the SM application in 2016, and it is referred to as Facebook Live. Facebook Live is available for Facebook users, groups and pages on desktop and mobile devices. Users can live stream video up to four hours directly from their mobile device or by linking to an external API [1] or camera using a stream key. When a video is live, there will be a red icon at the top left-hand corner of the video indicating that it is a live video. The word 'Live' is written next to the icon, along with the number of current viewers. When a video is live, it will be displayed in a user's timeline and people who frequently engage with or have recently interacted with a person or page going Live may receive a notification.

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[1] Application Programming Interface is a software intermediary that allows two applications to talk to each other.

Throughout the Facebook Live stream, other Facebook users can comment and react to the video in real time. The broadcaster can view these reactions and comments and monitor the number of live viewers on the screen while the video is being broadcast. Once the broadcast has ended, the broadcaster can publish the video or discard the video. If they choose to publish the video, the comments and reactions are also published and uploaded with the live video. The video then becomes a native video, and other Facebook users who missed the live stream can continue to engage with the video similar to a native video.

Rein and Venturini (2018) stated that Facebook Live is one of the most promising innovations in the current media landscape. Facebook's introduction of their new 'feature' to their existing platform has involved a particularly aggressive promotion strategy. For example, Facebook paid celebrities and media publishers (such as BuzzFeed, the *New York Times* and Vox Media) to create Facebook Live content and 'influence' other users to view and create their own Facebook Live content (Wagner, 2017). Since its introduction in 2016, Facebook users have created 3.5 billion Facebook live broadcasts, and nearly 2 billion people have viewed a Facebook Live broadcast (Fingas, 2018). The privacy settings on a Facebook Live post dictates the viewership. For example, if the live stream is from a public Facebook Page and the privacy settings are open to everyone, viewers will not require a Facebook profile. However, if an individual Facebook user is going live and has set the privacy to 'friends only', a Facebook account is required to view the live stream. Stelnzer (2016) suggests that Facebook Live is a perfect fit for marketing organisations as it provides the ability to create an intimate, authentic connection with a specific organisation. Furthermore, it's argued that Facebook Live has the ability to humanise and personalise an organisation or brand, as the videos are unedited and unpredictable, providing an authentic feel to viewers (Tang, Venolia, & Inkpen, 2016)**.**

Although the sense of unpredictability may create a sense of authenticity and encourage engagement for viewers, it also presents a level of risk for broadcasters. There are several factors that can impact the level of risk for organisations who choose to implement a live streaming. These may include the broadcast of offensive or inappropriate content that may impact brand reputation, showcasing information that would not typically be shown through posting a photo or pre-recorded video and losing control of the broadcast. Further implications of live streaming are provided in section 2.5.2.

1.2   BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH

1.2.1   Queensland Maroons Rugby League Team

Rugby league was established in Australia in 1907 (Rowe, 1997) under the governing body of New South Wales Rugby League (NSWRL), and from 1910 onwards, rugby league has held place as the premier winter sport of New South Wales (NSW) and Queensland and maintained a strong following in New Zealand (Moore & Carr, 2008). The NSWRL club competition evolved into an Australian National competition in the 1990s and became the National Rugby League (NRL) in 1998. The NRL competition includes teams from NSW, Queensland, Victoria and New Zealand. However, the sport of rugby league is strongest in the eastern Australian states (Queensland and NSW), with the majority of NRL teams and the governing body based in and around Sydney (Bruce & Tini, 2008).

The Queensland Rugby Football League was formed in 1908 by seven rugby players who were dissatisfied with the administration of the Queensland Rugby Union (QRU) as the Queensland Rugby Association (Irvine & Fortune, 2016.). In the same year, a Queensland representative rugby league team was formed and comprised of players living in the state to

compete against NSW in three representative matches which served as selection trials for the Australian national rugby league team. Queensland Rugby League (QRL) has responsibility for the management of the Queensland State of Origin team – the Queensland Maroons, which is a high-level representative rugby league team in the state of Queensland, Australia.

In 1982, a new rule was created whereby players were selected to represent their state based on the first club they played their first senior rugby league game with, even if they were no longer living in the state. The rule change created a new competition - State of Origin. The State of Origin series is the annual best of three Australian rugby league competition between the Queensland Maroons and the NSW Blues. Smitz, and Blake (2007) describe the competition as the pinnacle of rugby league, ranking the contest higher than international representative rugby league. 'The timeless cliché is that State of Origin is the best football you will ever play, and in sporting terms, State of Origin is our Tour de France, our Wimbledon, and our Americas Cup' (Crowd, 2009). Skipwith (2017) suggests that New Zealand-eligible players are lured away by the 'Origin carrot' - which forces them to align with Australia.

Under the current State of Origin eligibility rules, if a player chooses to play State of Origin, they are eligible to be selected for Australia and therefore ineligible for other tier one nations (e.g., New Zealand and England). For example, James Tamou is said to have 'turned his back on New Zealand to take up an offer from NSW (Crawley, 2012, Apr 6) after moving from New Zealand to Sydney at the age of thirteen. Tamou represented the New Zealand Junior Kiwis (New Zealand representative rugby league team), and later in his NRL career was offered selection to the Australian rugby league team. Tamou turned down the offer to

represent Australia, however when offered the chance to represent NSW in State of Origin, Tamou stated:

> Everyone knows Origin is centre stage for the world of rugby league. I grew up watching it with a passion and admiring the players who play in it…I was asked, and I decided I wanted to have a go at Origin (quoted in Crawley, 2012).

During the early years of the competition there was a level of competitive balance with both NSW and Queensland recording wins. However, in the past 12 years Queensland has won every series since 2006 (except for 2014, 2018 and 2019 when NSW won the series). Games are typically played on a Wednesday evening, three weeks apart during the middle of the NRL season. Matches are shared evenly among Queensland (Suncorp Stadium), and NSW (ANZ Stadium) with each state hosting Game 1 and 3 in alternate years; although games can also be scheduled to be played in other states to showcase the State of Origin rivalry around Australia. For example, in 2018 a game was taken to Melbourne and will be taken to Perth in 2019 and Adelaide in 2020). The aim of these showcases is to take the game away from the rugby league heartland and provide opportunities to engage with a new audience (Rennie, 2018).

State of Origin is one of the most watched sport events in Australia, with most games selling out and attracting large national television audiences (Table 1.1). When comparing television audiences of other sport 'events', State of Origin Game 1 was the highest rated television event in 2018 in Australia, with 3.5 million viewers (Table 1.2).

Table 1.1   *2017/2018 State of Origin Stadium Attendance and Television Viewers*

Host Stadium	Stadium Attendance	Television Viewers (million)
2017		
Game 1: Suncorp Stadium, Brisbane	50,039	3.6
Game 2: ANZ Stadium, Sydney	82,259	3.5
Game 3: Suncorp Stadium, Brisbane	52,540	3.7
2018		
Game 1: Melbourne Cricket Ground, Melbourne	87,122	3.5
Game 2: ANZ Stadium, Sydney	82,223	3.2
Game 3: Suncorp Stadium, Brisbane	51,124	2.7

Source MediaWeek (2018) & MediaWeek (2019)

Table 1.2   *2018 Top Rating TV Events (Australia Metro and Regional)*

TV Event	Channel	Television Viewers (Million)
State of Origin, Game 1	Nine	3.5
AFL Grand Final	Seven	3.4
AFL Grand Final Presentation	Seven	3.3
State of Origin, Game 2	Nine	3.2
NRL Grand Final	Nine	3.06

Source: Lallo, (Sydney Morning Herald, 2nd December 2018)

1.2.2   Queensland Maroons Social Media

QRL operate a '*Digital & Content'* department based in Brisbane, Australia, which has five

full time staff who oversee all digital aspects of the overall QRL brand, inclusive of:

Queensland Rugby League, Intrust Super Cup and the Queensland Maroons. The Queensland

Maroons Facebook page was first created on the 30th April 2008 and is verified by Facebook

as the only official brand page for the Queensland Maroons Rugby League team. In

comparison to the other QRL operated Facebook pages, the Queensland Maroons page is the

largest social media platform that QRL administers (Table 1.3). The Queensland Maroons

Facebook brand page has more followers than any of their other official SM platforms

including Twitter and Instagram, by an average of 86% (Table 1.4). However, a notable

emerging trend between July 2017 and July 2018 shows Facebook fan growth decreasing

while both Instagram and Twitter are increasing. This is consistent with trends of social

media usage more broadly (Anderson & Jiang, 2018).

Table 1.3   *Queensland Rugby League Facebook Brand Pages (March 2019)*

Facebook Page	Page Likes
Queensland Rugby League	30,000
Intrust Super Cup	66,000
Queensland Maroons	925,000

Table 1.4   *Queensland Maroons Social Media Presence (July 2017 and July 2018)*

Social Media	Page Likes/Followers	% Difference to Facebook
2017		
Facebook	944,000	N/A
Instagram	165,000	-82.52%
Twitter	89,600	-90.51%
	Mean Average Difference	**-86.52%**
2018		
Facebook	938,304	N/A
Instagram	207,000	-77.94%
Twitter	94,600	-88.,92%
	Mean Average Difference	-85.98%

1.3   MOTIVATION FOR THE RESEARCH

During my time as a Sport Development Officer at Griffith University, I was part of a team that was responsible for the Facebook brand page 'Griffith Sport'. From the years 2016 - 2019, the Facebook page has grown by 2,000 followers (network growth of 55%) and has become a vital communication and marketing tool in engaging students. The Facebook brand page has quickly become the main communication channel for building relationships with students and the community and is utilised more than previous traditional university sport marketing efforts, such as email communication or posters around campus. What intrigued me the most during this period was university management measured SM success and strategy on total page likes rather than on individual post engagement. Furthermore, there was confusion regarding who was responsible for SM. Although this would generally fall under the marketing role, it quickly becomes a first point of contact and therefore non-marketing staff are utilising these platforms to communicate quickly and efficiently with students.

In my role, I found SM to be the most engaging tool for students for recruitment to sport teams and communication for multiple university sport programs. Students responded quicker to Facebook posts or messages in comparison to emails, and posts were often shared, liked, and commented on through the Griffith Sport page, which helped the reach of our messages. However, it was time consuming to create posts, reply to messages and comments, and create and maintain a specific SM strategy. I was often asked to prove that my time was being used effectively in this area and asked to provide insights on reach and engagement. Furthermore, there were often different interpretations between marketing staff, university management and general staff on how this was best measured.

It is hoped that the opportunity to examine and explore reach and engagement of fans via Facebook Live Streaming will contribute to understanding of how its performance can be managed effectively in developing SMM.

1.4   RATIONALE

SM has profoundly changed the way sport organisations communicate with their fans by creating a personable approach that encourages consumers to interact directly with sport organisations rather than sport organisations using mass communication to 'broadcast to' their consumers. SM allows two-way communication with fans in comparison to traditional 'one-way' marketing from the organisation directly to the sport fan. While there is an increasing body of literature surrounding the use of SM in relation to sport (e.g. Williams, & Chinn, 2010; Abeza, O'Reilly, 2014; Tang, & Cooper 2018; Thompson, Martin, Gee, & Geurin, 2018), there is little research specifically examining sport organisations utilising SM live streaming, as it has only recently emerged as a subject of academic and practitioner interest. Recent research examining the use of Facebook Live is typically focused on the tool being used from a news provider standpoint (Hamison & Tang, 2017; Tang, Venolia, Inkpen,

Parker, Gruen, & Pelton, 2017; Raman, Tyson, & Sastry, 2018; Rein & Venturini, 2018; Todd & Melancon, 2018; Horsman, 2018; Johnson, Thomas, & Fishman, 2018). Although the use of Facebook Live has recently drawn academic interest, to date studies exploring Facebook Live use amongst sport organisations are limited. Importantly, Filo, Lock, and Karg (2014) suggest that to extend SM scholarly knowledge, future research should be extended through a more in-depth analysis or investigation.

1.4.1 Research Aims

The aim of this research is to examine the use of live streaming and how it is utilised within a SMM strategy. Specifically, it focuses on Facebook Live and the Queensland Maroons Facebook page during the 2017 State of Origin season (May 22 - July 10, 2017) and the 2018 State of Origin season (May 27 – July 13, 2018). This study addresses the following research questions, in the case of the Queensland Maroons;

1. Did Facebook 'live video' posts generate a higher level of engagement than other types of Facebook posts?

2. Did Facebook 'live video' posts generate a higher level of reach than other types of Facebook posts?

3. How did fans respond to Facebook 'live video' posts?

4. What were QRL's perspectives on the managerial implications of Facebook Live?

5. What impact did live streaming have on fan engagement?

1.5   DELIMITATIONS OF THE THESIS

This thesis explores one rugby league competition that is known as the State of Origin. This event is based in Australia and includes the participation of the Queensland Maroons and the NSW Blues. As a result, it does not consider any other rugby league events based in Australia, nor does it explore any other professional sport events or teams. For the purpose of this research, Facebook and Facebook Live are considered in an effort to understand the live streaming phenomenon. As a result, this thesis does not explore how other SM platforms are used by other sport organisations or how other SM platforms use live streaming capabilities.

The term 'fan' is used in this thesis to refer to those individuals who follow and consume social media content. This is in line with Bauer, Stokburger-Sauer, and Exler (2008) who argue that in the sports context, a "fan can be defined as someone who perceives him or herself as a follower of a certain sport product" (p. 206). In this thesis, the sport product relates to the Queensland Maroons. Furthermore, a fan is used in the context of Facebook engagement, in particular those who have 'liked' the Queensland Maroons Facebook page. In comparison, a 'user' identifies an individual who is engaging with the Queensland Maroons Facebook page, but has not 'liked' the Queensland Maroons Facebook page. However, as it was impossible to define users from fans when analysing comments across the research period, the term 'fan' is used throughout the fan responses sections. This research was based on Queensland Maroons fans who were engaging with the Queensland Maroons Facebook page at the time the research was conducted. These participants may or may not still be considered as fans.

1.6   STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

The content in this thesis is structured into seven chapters:

Chapter two begins with an overview of social media and provides a review of the literature. The focus of this chapter is on providing this thesis with current theoretical grounding and understanding of reach, engagement, fan responses to social media and live streaming. It also provides theoretical grounding in relation to the overarching concepts of this thesis: relationship marketing and fan engagement.

Chapter three outlines the research methodology used in this thesis. It begins with a discussion of the underpinning research philosophy and discusses the justification of a case study approach and selection of the Queensland Maroons. It provides rationale for using a multi-method approach and then explains data collection and data analysis for each of the methods utilised for this research. It concludes with explaining the ethical considerations of this thesis.

Chapters four and five present the results from the 2017 and 2018 collection period, respectively. Firstly, they provide an overview of the State of Origin season for the Queensland Maroons and their use of live streaming throughout the season. Results are then presented from a content analysis examining how live video posts compare to other types of posts (photo, video, link and text only) in terms of reach and engagement (reactions, shares, comments and views). In order to understand how fans are responding to live video posts, comments are analysed using a coding framework that was modified from previous research to meet the needs of this study. To gain a deeper understanding of Facebook Live in relation to the Queensland Maroons, results were examined from a semi-structured qualitative interview with a SM manager from QRL investigating their managerial perceptions of using

Facebook Live. The chapters conclude with a content analysis of the Queensland Maroons' live video posts within each collection period and identifies seven types of live videos in relation to how they may impact fan engagement.

Chapter six discusses each of the result chapters to provide links to existing literature in relation to reach, engagement, live streaming and fan engagement. This discussion explains concepts that emerge through analysing the data and consequently introduces a conceptual framework: 'Enhancing Fan Engagement through Live Streaming'. This chapter is amongst the first research to provide this level of analysis for a sport organisation's use of live streaming within their social media strategy for fan engagement.

Chapter seven draws together the conclusions from the findings and the broader overarching purpose of the thesis. It considers how live streaming can be used by sport organisations for relationship marketing and fan engagement in light of the findings presented, implications and contributions of the thesis. The chapter concludes with a brief overview of future research directions.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

This chapter provides an overview of current literature relating to the main concepts of this thesis. The chapter begins by providing a discussion of relationship marketing in relation to social media and provides an overview of sport-related research. It also provides an introduction into a construct of social media use for sport organisations – fan engagement. The following section provides details in relation to measuring reach and engagement on social media sites, specifically Facebook. It provides sport-related research in terms of measuring engagement and the concept of authenticity. It then offers an introduction to fan responses to social media posts and introduces the Schubert and Seyffert (2017) framework for measuring fan motives for engaging with social media. Following this, the final section discusses live streaming managerial perspectives and provides an overview of existing literature on live streaming. Further discussion is provided specifically in relation to Facebook Live providing background on characteristics and challenges of this tool.

2.1   SOCIAL MEDIA AND RELATIONSHIP MARKETING IN SPORT

Over the past few decades, sport-related research has conveyed the value and benefits of RM to sport organisations (Stavros, 2005; Harris & Ogbonna, 2008; Stavros et al., 2008; Gladden & Sutton, 2009; Kim & Trail, 2011). These benefits may include the development of long-term, devoted customers which 'in turn' may increase profitability, reduce costs, increase purchases, generate positive word-of-mouth comments, and boost employee retention (Kim & Trail, 2011). The sport industry is known to be fertile ground for RM (Kim & Trail, 2011). A sport fan is an enthusiastic consumer who is motivated to engage in behaviour related to

sport (Hunt, Bristol & Bashaw, 1999). Fans are often highly connected with their favourite sporting organisations and the emotions, experiences, and feelings associated with sport reflect fans' desire to become involved in, engaged in, and maintain a strong relationship with the sporting entities that they support (Kim, Trail, Woo & Zhang, 2011). Sport managers have embraced the opportunity of SM to create and maintain these relationships with their fans (Stavros et al., 2014) by creating an environment of ongoing interaction between the sport organisation and the fan.

The introduction of SM has substantially changed the way people, communities, and organisations communicate and interact. Colliander and Dahlen (2011) suggest that the development of SM has transformed how people interact and the very nature and definition of their relationship. A significant difference between new and traditional communication models is that one-to-one mass communication has become the norm in business transactions, replacing the one-to-many marketing promotion model (Ngai, Moon, Lam, Chin & Tao, 2015). In sporting organisations, Wallace, Wilson, and Miloch (2011) state that the advantages of SM appear well suited to build brands and relationships with fans. SM's 'two-way' nature of communication allows organisations to move beyond just talking directly at fans, allowing conversation between both the fan and the organisation (or between fans). Pronschinske, Groza and Walker (2012) and Stavros et al. (2014) stated that one of the values of SM for sport organisations is the ability to serve as a venue for conversations and engagement that helps fans to connect with each other as well as carry, extend, and amplify the game experience outside the sport arena. Sport managers can listen and understand fans' needs and create 'value adds' for fans to engage and potentially translate into the building, maintenance, and enhancement of relationships (Abeza, O'Reilly & Seguin, 2019).

In scholarly research, there is a growing amount of sport-related SM studies grounding their research in RM (Filo, et al., 2015). For example, Pronschinske, et al. (2012) utilised a relationship marketing framework to inform their content analysis of 114 professional sport team's Facebook pages in the United States and found that engagement strategies prompting fans to enter a two-way dialogue were effective in attracting (and maintaining) users to the Facebook page. Similarly, Dixon, Martinez and Martin (2015) explored the use of SM by American intercollegiate athletics departments and found that managers viewed SM as an important component of creating and maintaining relationships with stakeholders. Dixon et., al (2015) suggest that "as fans continue to be engaged with the sport organisation, SM tools provide the means for quick informational access and allow fans to better identify with the organisation" (p. 110).

With regards to sport events, Thompson, Martin, Gee and Geurin (2017) found fans are willing to connect and interact with sport events but caution that they may absolve their connection if content is irrelevant or too infrequent. Furthermore, Abeza and O'Reilly (2014) examined the use of SM by Canadian National Sport Organisations (NSOs) with the purpose of communication and interaction. Results found that NSOs' SM did little to interact with stakeholders, which resulted in users preferring to "like" content rather than engaging in meaningful two-way conversations.

Sport organisations may strategically utilise SM with the aim of building relationships and generating offline support. However, Svensson, Mahoney, and Hambrick's (2015) research on non-profit sport organisations' use of Twitter to disseminate information, build engagement, and facilitate action found one-way communication was most common and the use of SM to facilitate action among stakeholders was scarce. These organisations are using

SM to disseminate news and promote events, however interviews with staff members reveal that they face challenges in engaging users in conversations. Stavros, et al. (2014)'s research on the Facebook sites of several National Basketball Association (NBA) teams, found that fans exercise four key motives to communicate on these SM sites: passion, hope, esteem and camaraderie. Therefore, fans are willing to engage in conversation with sport organisations, but SM strategy may need to be structured specifically around fan motives to allow these conversations to emerge. It may be suggested that sport organisations could specifically ask fans for their opinions, input and thoughts to encourage fans to comment and create conversations through SM.

Similarly, the types of SM content may influence the level of engagement with sport fans. Williams, Chinn and Suleiman's (2014) research on several National Basketball Association (NBA) Twitter accounts found fans were more interested in categories of tweets in the areas of news, conversations/commentary/opinions, in comparison to tweets related to community relations/charity and fan-generated content.. Twitter has the power to be engaging for fans when sport organisations understand what type of content fans are engaging, this is particularly notable as Williams et al. (2014) further suggested the use of Twitter has the opportunity to provide fans instant access to breaking news and access conversations on 'insider information' or behind the scenes content which may "increase fan involvement, strengthen associations and allow closer connections to the team" (p.46).

Therefore, SM can be an important tool for sport organisations to build relationships with their fans. Abeza et al. (2019) identified opportunities and challenges of SM as a RM tool. Semi- structured interviews were conducted with 26 managers of professional sport teams from the four major leagues in North America. Results stated that sport managers' objectives

to use SM as a RM tool included: interaction, updates, public relations, sales, sponsorship and customer service. The sport managers indicated that their primary objective was interaction followed by customer service. This finding is consistent with other research that suggests organisations can encourage interaction by utilising SM pages to post less about products and focus on creating unique content to help customers get to know the people and the personality of the organisation with the aim of creating a relationship with the consumer, rather than directly selling a product (Gordhammer, 2009). This point is echoed by Moretti and Tuan (2014) who suggest "using SM is not an easy task and may require a cultural and organisational shift and more of a listening and sharing culture than a selling culture" (p. 124). It is important for sport managers to ensure that SM posts are not merely advertisements for sales, which may alienate fans (Yoshida, Gordon, Nakazawa, & Biscaia, 2014). Scott, Naylor, and Bruffy (2016) suggest that sport managers should balance the needs of an organisation with the needs of SM consumers. Whilst an organisation may need sales, this should be balanced with the needs of SM consumers through engagement.

Heller, Baird and Parasnis (2011) believe that organisations need to design SM experiences that are unique to their brand, offer value and exploit the power of social networks with a focus on value in return for customer's time and attention. Consequently, organisations need to develop a new mindset by utilising SM activity that does not simply replace the traditional ones, but instead expands media choices to gain reach, intimacy and engagement (Hanna, et al., 2011). As SM is continuously evolving, the way in which sport organisations may create, and maintain relationships is also evolving. Rather than merely incorporating SM as part of a strategic marketing plan, sport managers need to consider ways to engage their fans through meaningful interaction.

Abeza et al. (2019) identified seven opportunities that SM presented in meeting RM goals to facilitate the building, maintenance and enhancement of relationships between sport organisations and fans: team centred (knowledge of fans, feeling the pulse, brand humanisation, ongoing dialogue) and fan centred (fan nations, content delivery, and customer service). Through understanding these opportunities, sport organisations can create added value for their fans to develop a customised approach in their marketing efforts. However, although there are several opportunities through SM to meet RM goals, there are also several challenges to make the SM platform engaging and valuable for fans (Schultz & Peltier, 2013). Abeza et al. (2019) also identified seven challenges meeting RM goals, which are examined from three dimensions: management related (change management, operational management), data related (actionable data, lack of control over messages) and actors related (influential opinion leaders, internal conflict of interest and anonymity/true online customers). However, as SM is constantly evolving, sport organisations are experimenting with content management and adjusting their strategies accordingly, therefore these challenges may be controllable within the resources of the organisation.

2.2   REACH

Ryan and Jones (2012) argued digital marketing has overtaken traditional mass media as the medium of choice for reaching consumers. They point out that while it took television 22 years to reach 50 million households, it took the internet under five years to achieve the same level of penetration. In traditional mass media, reach is relevant in understanding magazine circulation numbers, or country specific television ratings for TV audiences. However, in SM, reach refers to the size of the potential audience for a message (Union Metrics, 2018). A key difference though of SM reach capacity is the ability to both broaden the scope of marketing reach and narrow the focus at the same time (Ryan & Jones, 2012). SM allows organisations to transcend traditional constraints such as location and time zones to connect with a wider audience, but it allows marketing messages to target specific niche segments that are specific to each message.

Globally, Facebook is currently the largest social network, with over 2.2 billion active users (Statista, 2018). Therefore, creating engaging Facebook content has the power to increase an organisation's marketing reach to one of the largest global audiences, and has the ability to create target markets to reach specific consumers inside or outside of an organisation's typical target audience. Facebook defines post reach as the "number of people who had any posts from a Facebook Page enter their screen" (Facebook, 2018a, para.1.). Facebook reach is split into two categories, organic reach and paid reach. Organic reach is defined as the "number of people who have seen your post through unpaid distribution" (Dodson, 2015, p. 1); in comparison paid reach is defined as "the number of unique individuals who saw a specific post from your page through a paid source like a Facebook advertisement or promoted post" (Meert, 2016, para. 1). It is important to note the differences between these two types of reach, due to the suggested levels of declining reach.

In 2013, if a brand page created a post on Facebook, organisations may have expected the post to have an organic reach of 12% of their total followers; however, by 2018 most posts had an organic reach of less than 5% (Izea, 2019). The decline in organic reach may be attributed to three factors: the growing amount of data on Facebook (Craig, 2018), focus on promoted posts, and changing Facebook algorithms.

As the volume of content increases on Facebook every day, organic reach is steadily declining (Dodson, 2015). Every minute on Facebook, 510,000 comments are posted, 293,000 text statuses are updated, and 136,000 photos are uploaded (Schultz, 2017). Therefore, the newsfeed is flooded with content and users can often be overwhelmed with the amount of content reaching them and it is near impossible to see every piece of content within the newsfeed (Bright, Kleiser & Grau, 2015). While organic posts are only shown to a percentage of a page's Facebook fans, paid advertising allows organisations to target people who may not have liked the page but have similar interest, or specific demographics to further promote and increase the reach of the post (Nucleo, 2016).

DeMers (2014) states that Facebook is continuing to become 'pay to play', encouraging pages to boost or put money behind their content, or brand pages to reach larger audiences and ultimately increase their page followers. While organic posts only get shown to a page's Facebook fans, a promoted post allows Facebook pages to target people who have not liked the page but have similar interests and/or demographics. Curran, Graham and Temple (2011) state that

> Social networking sites in general, now account for one out of every five ads people
> view online. As the top social media sites can deliver high reach and frequency

against target segments at a low cost, it appears that some advertisers are eager to use social networking sites as a new advertising delivery vehicle (p. 26).

As Facebook puts more of an emphasis on promoted posts, organisations should have a willingness to adapt with Facebook to stay relevant by no longer relying on organic reach, but rather allotting a portion of their budget to Facebook marketing. Furthermore, Facebook's ever-changing algorithms may be somewhat to blame for the decline in organic reach. Algorithms constitute the technological core of Facebook and "control the 'visibility' of friends, news, items, or ideas" (van Dijck, 2013, p. 49). Thus, "social media platforms do not merely transmit content but filter it on the basis of claiming to augment it, thereby making the content more relevant to its potential consumers" (O'Callaghan, Greene, Conway, Carthy, & Cunningham, 2015, p. 460). In 2018, Facebook changed its newsfeed algorithm to focus on meaningful social interaction by prioritising the content of friends, rather than brand and publishers' content (Mosseri, 2018). Therefore, as a response to this change organisation's SM strategy has also had to change.

2.2.1   Content Relevancy

While organisations may have previously focused on driving website traffic, changes to content posted have become more important in order to bolster organic reach. Content should be focused on "prioritising posts that spark meaningful interactions between people... these posts that inspire back-and-forth discussion in the comments and posts that individuals want to share and react to... prompting a lot of discussion" (Mosseri, 2018, para. 3). Meaningful interactions such as commenting and sharing are the focus as they require more effort on the part of the user and are therefore more meaningful. Facebook wants more users to stop scrolling and pausing to 'like' a post, but rather be inspired to engage in conversations with

one another (Tein, 2018). Peters (2018) suggests instead of focusing on what makes content popular and attention-grabbing, "organisations need to focus on what makes content personal and conversation-worthy" (para 3). Although these changes can be a challenge for Facebook page administrators, they have the potential to make the time users spend on Facebook more valuable for both the page manager and the fan. Furthermore, these changes have created a challenge for organisations to benchmark and measure SM data. Zelm (2018) suggests newsfeed algorithm changes have created a challenge for SM managers, as comparing Facebook reach across various periods may no longer be valid, as 'you are no longer comparing apples to apples' (para. 6).

The type of post used also influences the Facebook newsfeed algorithm. Ahmed (2018) states that videos are the type of Facebook content most likely to reach audiences, with average video posts in 2017 reaching 12.05% of total page audiences, in comparison to photos at 11.63%, links at 7.81%, and status updates at only 4.56%. Facebook believe that viewers spend at least three times longer on average watching live video broadcasts than native video, and therefore argue that live video is vital to include in SM marketing strategies to generate engagement (Kant & Xu, 2016).

As live videos are becoming more popular on Facebook (Haimson & Tang, 2017), they are now considered as their own content type. Facebook has recently changed how live videos appear on the newsfeed, by giving live videos priority. 'Live videos are more likely to appear higher in the newsfeed when those videos are actually live, compared to after they are no longer live' (Kant & Xu, 2016, para 4). Facebook gives priority to live video by creating pop-up notifications in the lower left corner of a fan's newsfeed or creating a mobile notification when someone they follow goes live. Regan (2018) believes that Facebook Live is key for

increased brand exposure, and states that many organisations use it to reach an audience outside of their network. Therefore, it may be suggested that live videos have a higher organic reach than any other type of content due to the push from Facebook.

Rather than focusing on the decline of organic reach, SMM may focus on ways to create engagement. For example, Bernazzani (2018) suggests that the more people engage with content, the more people will see the post as by simply interacting with a post, a Facebook user can further a post's organic reach. Through this level of interaction, it may be suggested that fans who are more engaged on social media channels will share content more, which builds an organisation's overall reach (Peters, Chen, Kaplan, Ognibeni, & Pauwels, 2013; Paletz, Auxier, & Golonka, 2019). An organisation that has engaged customers through SM may have the following benefits: increased visibility and improved brand image (Goh, Heng, & Lin, 2013). To contest the decline in organic reach, Lepe (2018) and Bingham, Conner & Pink (2015) suggest brand pages should utilise SM strategies focused on telling their brand's story by creating real-time, planned content that encourages engagement and conversation.

Although Facebook considers reach to be an important key performance indicator of a SM marketing strategy, with a high volume of content being created daily on Facebook and Facebook's changing news feed algorithm, organisations should also focus on understanding what post type and content will best organically reach their audience and focus on creating meaningful interactions by improving the level of engagement (Mosseri, 2018). In line with this point, Kyberd (2017) argues that engagement is more important than reach, as it is evidence of how the audience feels about the content and in turn may boost organic reach.

2.3   ENGAGEMENT

There is still much debate in the academic community and industry about what SM 'engagement' is and how engagement can be defined. Andel, de Vreede, de Vreede, Padmanabhan, and Spector (2018) argue that user engagement has become central to an organisation's success more than ever before, but there is still no existing user engagement measure that can be used consistently and reliably. Furthermore, it is important to note that there are also differences between industry and academia – each of which prioritises certain aspects and approaches. For example, Voorveld, van Noort, Muntinga, and Bronner (2018) suggest that industry engagement is usually assessed with "social media monitoring tools providing quantitative metrics, such as the number of likes, shares, comments, opens, views, followers, or clicks, as indicators of level of engagement or valence of engagement (positive or negative comments)" (p. 38). Alternatively, academic research tends to focus on the executional factors in the content that drives SM engagement (e.g., Ashley & Tuten, 2015; De Vries & Carlson 2014). Furthermore, in sport, Achen, Lebel and Clavio (2017) suggest that engagement differs from a sport organisation and a fan perspective. From a RM standpoint, it is essential to focus the definition of engagement on SM from a fan's perspective because fans are at the core of RM strategy. Research on defining SM Engagement found sport fans indicate their idea of engagement includes "reading content, sharing it offline with friends and family, and using it in conversations in the workplace and various social settings" (Achen et al., p. 14). However, this type of engagement can be difficult for sport organisations to measure.

However, despite the differences in measurement and definition of engagement, in both academia and industry, engagement is recognised as one of the most important goals of SM implementation (Williams & Chinn, 2010), as emphasised by Sukhraj (2017) who states that

'engagement is, hands down, the number one area that you should be concerned with on SM. It is the catalyst for improvement in all the other SM key performance indicators' (para.1).

Engagement provides solid evidence for measuring SM usage because it is defined by action instead of simple viewing and tells the administrator what content fans are interested in (Houk & Thornhill, 2013). Successful engagement indicators may include an increase in overall engagement, an increase in post reach and an increase in website visits through Facebook. These increases are further supported by Cvijikj and Michahelles (2013) who propose that engaging content increases the number of Facebook fans, which results in an increased SM network and increased potential organic reach.

In the case of Facebook, engagement is defined by the organisation itself as 'actions taken by brand page followers on brand page content and include post clicks, post likes, post comments and post shares' (Facebook, 2018b, para 2). Facebook users can engage with a Facebook brand page by clicking on a post, commenting on a post, indicating interest in a post by pressing the 'reaction' button, like, love, haha, or sharing the post. Cvijikj and Michahelles (2013) suggest that these actions generate a story, which may turn into a story on their friends' timelines, and therefore represents a form of word of mouth communication. Haikel-Elsabeh, Zhao, Ivens, and Brem (2019) believe that the more a user feels strongly about a brand, the more they are likely to share an organisation's post through Facebook. Measuring engagement is considered a preferable measure of page popularity, as it helps SM managers understand what type of posts users are interacting with in comparison to reach which measures posts seen. This point is emphasised by Barnhart (2018) who suggests the measurement of engagement on Facebook is important by suggesting that there is no point on creating content if fans are not engaged.

There is a growing amount of research on measuring engagement on organisations' Facebook pages. Bonsón and Ratkai (2013) noted the primary metrics for users to engage with content was based on popularity, commitment and virality, measuring engagement on likes, comments, and shares. Studies by Cvijikj and Michahelles (2013), De Vries, Gensler and Leeflang (2012), and Gerlitz and Helmond (2013) used absolute values of likes, comments and shares, and averaged them by page followers, by page post and conducted logarithmic transformation. Achen (2016) measured the engagement on several official NBA Facebook pages by recording the number of likes, shares and comments posts received during the collection period. A similar study by Luarn, Lin, and Chu (2015) examined how various characteristics of brand posts influence online engagement on Facebook brand pages. Engagement was measured by noting the number of likes, shares and comments on each post. Therefore, it may be the consensus that specifically Facebook engagement is focused on likes, shares, and comments (Leung, 2012; Luarn et al., 2015; Zudrell, 2016).

To better understand the overall impact of SM engagement, a conceptual model for measuring the impacts of social media marketing was proposed by Achen (2017). The model includes four major constructs: social media engagement, relationship quality, referral behaviours, and purchase behaviours. Social media engagement consists of three sub-constructs: interaction, consumption and integration. Interaction is focused on engagement metrics determined by the SM platform such as comments, shares and retweets. Consumption is used to measure behaviours that are not easily seen such as visiting links, reading a post or viewing a video. Finally, integration includes the use of information seen on SM in daily life (such as reach). Therefore, in the case of Facebook, engagement is not just focused on likes, shares and comments, but is also incorporates reach, post clicks, and views.

Facebook Insights is Facebook's analysis tool, providing information about a page's performance and providing statistics on user's growth, demographics, consumption of content, and creation of content (van Dam & van de Velden, 2015). Lee, Hosangar, and Nair (2018) state that these Insight metrics are commonly used in industry as measures of engagement. One such Insights metric SM managers may use to measure a post's success and gain an understanding of Facebook engagement, is the engagement rate. This metric measures a brand's effectiveness at engaging their audience. Engagement rate relates to the percentage of Facebook users, or fans, that are being 'reached' by a post, and how many are 'interacting' (a sum of reactions, comments, shares, and post clicks) with the post rather than simply scrolling past the post when it is delivered to them**.** The engagement rate is measured by using Facebook Insight data and calculated by dividing *Post Interaction* by *Post Reach*. Using this metric, SM managers can calculate engagement rate based on more than likes, shares, and comments.

Lua (2018) suggests that all engagement is not created equal, and the Facebook newsfeed algorithm places a different weight on likes, comments and shares. Specific engagement behaviours are of interest to SM managers, especially as Bonsón and Ratkai (2013) recommended that research examine the differences between number of likes, comments, and shares on posted content to reveal the potential meaning of differences. Grabowski (2015) states that likes are the simplest action users can use to interact with content and take little effort to use. Sharing posts can be more valuable and allows a user to share the information to their connections – in turn, increasing the reach of content. However, a comment allows a higher level of connection with content, with users indicating the content inspires them to voice their opinion, have a voice, or initiate conversation.

As Facebook is focused on placing a higher emphasis on 'meaningful interactions' as a measure of increased visibility, Corcoran, (2018) suggests that "comments are considered one way of measuring the degree of meaningful interaction" (para.1). Furthermore, Facebook focuses on 'posts that inspire back-and-forth discussion in the comments and posts that you might want to share and react to' (Mosseri, 2018, para 3). Mosseri (2018) suggests that using live video such as Facebook Live is more likely to generate post comments. Research shows that people differentiate their opinions, and user comments seem to generate subsequent comments (e.g. Moe & Trusov 2011; Schlosser 2005). Comments that are negative and positive are related to an overall increase of comments on a post (de Vries et al., 2012). This outcome is an important finding for SM managers, as it may indicate that negative comments are not necessarily bad, and fans may feel part of a community because they engage in discussion with both positive and negative arguments.

Research has indicated that the type of engagement (like, comment, share) does not have the same impact on Facebook fans. Agrawal, Gupta, and Yousaf (2018) conducted a content analysis of FB posts in the official pages of selected Indian Premier League (IPL) teams. The research was undertaken applying Mariani, Mariani, Di Felice, and Mura's (2016) engagement metrics. The engagement metrics apply different weights to likes, shares and comments in the ratio of 20-30-50. This metric suggests likes as the most passive form of engagement (low-level), sharing of a post (medium level) and commenting or replying to a comment as the highest level of engagement. Key findings highlighted that when the key number of likes grow on a post it impacts the growth of comments and shares and vice versa. Photo posts were most likely to impact the number of shares per post and videos were most likely to impact the number of comments per post. Furthermore, the findings suggest that "the numbers of likes, shares and comments are not as a single combined 'engagement'

measure but represent three different levels of engagement and are useful for future research" (Argawal et al., 2018, p. 353).

Additionally, the type of Facebook post may influence engagement levels (Wallace et al., 2011), however consensus has not been reached within the academic world on the most engaging media type (Terä, 2017). Facebook brand pages have the ability to post photos, videos, links, text status and live video. Jayasingh and Venkatesh (2015) measured engagement as interactions (likes, comments, shares) across 134 various industry Facebook brand pages and found the highest average interactions were for photo posts. However, the type of interaction varied amongst the post type. For example, video posts had the highest number of shares, and text-status posts had the highest amount of comments. Further studies supported this outcome and found photos to have the highest level of engagement in comparison to other types of posts (Brookes, 2010; Leung, 2012; Sabate Berbegal-Mirabent, Cañabate, Lebherz, & 2014; Kim, Spiller, & Hettche, 2015, Luarn et al., 2015). Contrarily, de Vries et.al., (2015) analysed 355 brand posts from 11 international brands spread across six product categories and found video posts had the highest levels of engagement.

The key characteristics of interactivity and vividness of video posts are suggested as important factors in driving engagement in comparison to other types of posts. de Vries et.al (2015) suggest that a video is more vivid than a picture because the former both stimulates sight, and hearing, and therefore SM managers who want "to enhance the number of likes, can place a highly vivid or a medium interactive brand post characteristics such as a video" (p. 89). Interactivity was found to be a key component in increasing the number of comments on a video post such as asking questions of the audience or providing an experience for the viewer. Similarly, Kite, Foley, Grunseit, and Freeman's (2016) study on Australian public

health organisations' Facebook pages found video posts attracted the greatest amount of engagement. However, they suggested that this may be a reflection of the Facebook algorithm which governs the users' newsfeeds and appears to give preference to videos over other post types. In academic research, literature has not considered live video posts as their own type, and therefore there is limited understanding of the level of engagement of live video posts in comparison to other post types.

It is important for sport marketers to understand what type of content is engaging their fans to drive content strategy. A strategic content plan on social media is imperative because the content of posts is an important driver of engagement and relationship building (Pronschinske et al., 2012; Rishika, Kumar, Janakiraman, & Bezawada, 2013). Research suggests that the most effective content encourages engagement, discussion, and conversation (Heinonen, 2011; Walsh, et al, 2013). In the sport industry, there is limited research in understanding what types of content are effective for encouraging engagement and building relationships with fans.

That said, Achen, Kaczorowski, Horsman, and Ketzler (2018) explored North American professional sport organisations' Facebook pages and found content that was coded as player and personnel promotion (including behind the scenes content and human-interest stories) received the highest levels of interaction. These findings were similar to Achen's (2016) earlier research on NBA Facebook pages. Results found content coded as player and personnel promotion received the greatest number of likes and shares, however content designed to encourage fan interactivity received the most comments (such as asking fans questions or filling in the blanks). To increase post engagement over a long-term period, Agrawal et al., (2018) suggest posts should feature sport fans or celebrities displaying a

release of tension or solidarity, or a visual display of emotion to help build a relationship with the fan. Building relationships with fans can be facilitated by connecting them with players and organisational staff as humans instead of only 'athletes' or 'staff'.

Thompson, Martin, Gee, and Eagleman's (2014) research on New Zealand sporting organisations' Facebook pages found content that featured behind the scenes activity encouraged greater fan interaction and engagement. Behind the scenes content is important for the relationship building process, as Grönroos (2004) suggests it gives fans additional information they do not receive from other media sources. Furthermore, Lee, Ahn and Kim (2014) suggest that through SM content marketing, organisations that have a focus on sharing content that is focused on showcasing the personal, human side of the brand benefit from higher user engagement (measured by likes, comments, and shares) than any other types of content.

The type of content is not only important but also the concept of scheduling is a key factor of marketing strategies (Kumar, Jacob, & Sriskandarajah, 2006) affecting engagement levels (Mochon, Johnson, Schwartz, & Ariley, 2017). For example, Kanuri, Chen and Sridhar's (2018) research on 50 U.S. newspapers' Facebook pages found that time-of-day affects users' engagement, as well as the type of content posted depending on the time of day. Facebook fans displayed the highest level of engagement in the morning and were more likely to click external links in the morning than the evening. In relation to professional sport teams, Klein-Shagrir (2017) points out that "the television's liveness can be extended beyond the transmission itself by digital platforms and social networks in particular, which serve as a 'second screen'" (p. 59). The use of a second screen allows engagement typically beyond the scope of the sport television broadcast, and may allow a user to watch behind-the-scenes

content prior to, during or after the broadcast, and send messages that affect the content in real time (e.g. voting for player of the match; Weimann-Saks, Ariel, & Vered Elishar-Malka, 2019). A study by SM management platform SproutSocial analysed 25,000 Facebook pages across various industries and found the best time to post on Facebook for maximum engagement was Wednesday between 11am and 1pm. Comparatively, Sunday has the least amount of engagement during the week, and evenings after 5pm have the least amount of engagement per day (Arnes, 2019). In the sport industry, events take place during pre-specified times, are seasonal, attract large audiences, and are fast paced (Corney, Martin, & Göker, 2014). Engagement timings may not fall into the traditional SM engagement windows and therefore the timing of SM posts prior, during and after live sport events may have higher engagement levels. Thus, it is important to undertake sport specific studies as the unique context may mean that general engagement 'rules' may not apply.

2.3.1 Content Authenticity

Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) suggest that authenticity will give consumers a reason to engage with SM content. In the era of 'fake news', 'fake images' and 'fake impressions', brand authenticity is a highly valuable asset (Kucharska, Brunetti, Confente, & Mladenović, 2018). If managed successfully, SM can be raw, real and in the moment, which is in contrast to the overly staged or managed content that previously existed. Whilst some athletes were previously inaccessible, there is something engaging about a raw and authentic access to these athletes (Bilton, 2016), a point further emphasised by Koch who (2012) states that "for some sports teams, their SM accounts are flooded with images taken by professional photographers, often for the *AP* or *Getty*. The Boston Celtics, meanwhile, provide candid, authentic material for their diehard fans" (para.27). This point was further echoed by Henley who suggested:

Fans wish to have a connection with their favourite athlete where they feel they are

being included and invited to a glimpse of their personal/non-professional life… the

sense that this virtual closeness is authentic is reinforced by the seemingly direct

nature of this fan/athlete contact as it is not filtered through traditional journalistic

practices (quoted in Caldwell, 2017, para.12).

Through SM, sport athletes and organisations have the opportunity to bypass traditional

media, providing them with the opportunity to communicate and create an authentic narrative

with their fans. Therefore, authenticity "encapsulates what is genuine, real, and/or true"

(Beverland & Farrelly, 2010, p. 839).

Furthermore, 5WPR (2019) points out that brands are now expected to always remain honest

and transparent to connect with customers through creating a developed brand story rather

than continuous advertising and marketing. It is important for a professional sport team to

remain authentic on SM when the team is not performing well. Mike Washington (Director of

Digital Media for the Washington Wizards) stated in an interview that:

Winning certainly makes everything easier, but as long as you listen to what your fans

are telling you, both literally via their feedback and analytically based on what they're

consuming, it is possible to keep them engaged and consuming in the face of poor

team performance (quoted in Olenski, 2012, para. 12)

For organisations to evoke a sense of authenticity, SM messages that create trust must be

present within the marketing strategy (Brown, Kozinets, & Sherry, 2003). In sport, Filo,

Funk, and Alexandris (2008) suggest that there is a central mediating role of brand trust in

relation to brand loyalty and it may also be a concept that affects relationship quality (Kim & Trail, 2011). A relationship between the sport organisation and fan is important as interactions between an organisation and its customers can reinforce brand authenticity (Brodie & De Chernatony, 2009; Grönroos, 2006). Schlosser, White and Lloyd (2006) propose that building trust through social media may be challenging as consumers may be sceptical of content due to the open-centric nature of the internet. Furthermore, it may be suggested that we are now in a media environment that focuses on immediacy rather than accuracy.

It is vital that sport organisations employ a SM 'verification' process to ensure the authenticity of their SM presence, which conveys an official presence which can assuage user scepticism and evoke involvement (Pronschinske, et al., 2012). Pages can be verified to be authentic by Facebook by having a blue tick badge, or profiles confirming the page or profile of a public figure, media company or brand is authentic. Furthermore, sport organisations that have a Facebook icon link located on the team's website allows users to be directed to the official page and shows fans that the organisation would like to engage with their fans.

Gilmore and Pine (2007) identified five genres of authenticity; commodities, goods, services, experiences, and transformations. All five genres indicate that authenticity can be derived from the following characteristics: one of a kind, unique, customised, and existing in a raw or organic state. This authenticity can be relevant for SM, as Schrieberg (2018) suggests that people are tired of SM content that feels fake, over-produced or too commercial. Authentic SM content is about being unique, real, customised and raw. Da Costa (2019) mentions that the battle for SM authenticity is about showcasing the human side of business to make an audience truly feel a part of the brand. Sport fans crave authentic looks at the lives of their

favourite athletes and sport organisations and want to see glimpses into their everyday lives (Pegoraro & Jinnah, 2012). Furthermore, Syrdal and Briggs (2018) suggest that consumers find content more engaging when it's perceived to be authentic.

Sport fans both enjoy hearing and seeing athletes as 'real people', and also want to view an authentic human side (Leggio, 2018; Kowalczyk & Pounders, 2016) to an organisation. Presentations of athletes and sport organisations that were once "highly formal productions, filtered by marketing professionals, journalists, and public relations specialists, are now expected to be authentic and insightful accounts representative of an athlete's personality and character" (Lebel, 2013, p. 3). Sport organisations and athletes are able to use SM as a platform to showcase behind the scenes, and personal content from their everyday lives.

Geurin-Eagleman and Burch (2016) examined Olympic athletes' self-presentation on Instagram and found the most popular content for engagement (comments and likes) was personal life photos where athletes were able to provide a glimpse into their personal lives and showcase themselves as a 'real person'. This point was further emphasised by Achen et al. (2017) who stated that 'respondents were eager to connect with teams and athletes outside of the sport itself and they appreciated human-interest stories. Respondents commented, "I find the most engaging sport related content to be the stories, both through video and articles, that show or tell information about the players and who they are as people" (p. 11). While previously athletes were limited to the 'marketing' of themselves through how they were portrayed by their sport organisation, they have now a platform to provide insight into their personal lives. This opportunity allows fans to engage beyond the sporting barriers and potentially evoke a sense of authenticity that was not previously available through traditional media.

While previous literature has examined the authenticity of behind the scenes and personal content through SM, there is limited research on understanding how sport organisations may use Facebook Live to create a sense of authenticity. Facebook Live offers brands the ability to publish video content in real time, and its authenticity originates from the fact there is no time to alter or modify content, thereby turning it into a form of 'produced' media. This opportunity may create a sense of internalisation (Sandlin and Peña, 2014), as the authenticity of content may create a shift in users from an external perspective of an organisation, to identifying with the organisation through an internal perspective. Thus, providing a sense that everything is raw and seen as it is happening in real time (SkuLocal, 2017). Smilansky (2016) suggests that there is a certain authenticity in live video that is often absent in other content types. In comparison to native video, or photo posts, Schools (2018) believes you can't hide on Facebook Live; it is either real or it's not. There is an inherent understanding that live video will be imperfect, which may make it more genuine than uploaded video content. This sentiment is further echoed by Warna (2017) who believes that viewers do not want perfection, the viewer wants rawness, honesty, openness and authenticity. Facebook users are wanting to see their favourite brands, athletes or organisations 'act like themselves'. Farrell (2019) emphasised this by stating:

> When I say authenticity, you know I think everybody's like, 'Okay, let me go do an authentic Facebook Live.' Well, you've already screwed yourself up if you say that because authentic is not a way you act. Acting like yourself is authentic (para.7).

2.4   FAN RESPONSES

In the past a fan's access to their favourite sporting team or athlete was limited to what could be observed through television, radio or print media. The emergence of SM now provides sport fans a feeling that they have unprecedented access to sporting organisations and athletes. Thorpe and Dumont (2018) suggest that these new communication technologies are reshaping sport organisations and athlete-to-fan communication and have the ability to change the athlete/fan interaction forever (Gregory, 2009; Gibbs & Hayne, 2013). To develop an effective relationship marketing strategy, sport managers must understand how fans are interacting with one another and the organisations, and how these are uniquely identified in the SM context (Beverland, Farrelly, & Quester, 2010). Sport organisations that fail to understand this unique relationship face the risk of losing their fans and the opportunities of SM (Thompson et al., 2014). In order to improve SM communication and develop relationships with fans it is crucial for sport organisations to understand how sport consumers are responding to SM (Filo & Funk, 2005). Developing a better understanding of how fans respond to SM allows sport organisations the opportunity to create customised SM content which, may in turn reinforce brand awareness, reach a higher level of fans, and encourage higher levels of engagement (Eagleman, Pedersen, & Wharton, 2009; Eagleman, 2013; Anagnostopoulos, Parganas, Chadwick, & Fenton, 2018; Vale & Fernandes, 2018).

While previous literature examined how fans were interacting with websites (Seo & Green, 2008), Twitter (Clavio & Kian, 2010; Hambrick, Simmons, Greenhalgh, & Greenwell, 2010; Frederick, Lim, Clavio, & Walsh, 2012), and Facebook (Pronschinske, et al., 2012; Sanderson, 2013), Stavros, et al. (2014) suggested there is a requirement to have a deeper and empirically informed understanding of how sport fans are engaging with SM. Their study on a variety of NBA Team Facebook fan pages found a number of themes stemming from

comments left on Facebook posts with the purpose of being with their team, athletes and the broader fan community. Fans exercise four key motives to draw value from the SM connection to the team: passion, hope, esteem and camaraderie (Stavros, et al, 2014). Passion relates to strong displays of affection, showing a combination of encouragement, admiration and praise; hope refers to the notion of desirable achievement and outcomes of the team; esteem relates to comments directed toward either the team, or other fans to show expertise and knowledge; and camaraderie are community directed comments that reflect a desire to identify as a fan and interact with the virtual community.

However, research has shown that motivational profiles of fans of different sports vary (Wann, Grieve, Zapalac, & Pease, 2008; Izzo, Munteanu, Langford, Ceobanu, Dumitru, & Nichifor, 2011; Keaton, Watanabe, & Ruihley, 2015; Pu, & James, 2017; Wann & James, 2018) and therefore it can be difficult to apply these motives to all sport consumers.

2.4.1   Encouraging Fan Interaction

Schubert and Seyffert (2017) expanded on Stavros et al.'s (2014) research through a Facebook page content analysis and interviews with personnel from an international sport federation. Results found that while some of the motives (passion, esteem, camaraderie) had been broadly identified in previous research (e.g., Stavros et al., 2014) they lacked a distinct understanding and interpretation. Their findings indicated eight categories that were derived from the Facebook page comments, which help understand the reasons for fans interacting on SM: expertise, passion, support, help, quiz participation, esteem, camaraderie and criticism. Schubert and Seyffert (2017) break these motives down into sub-categories and provide SM managers and researchers with suggestions on how to apply these motives to shape their SM posts. Table 2.1 shows these motives broken into their categories and sub-categories.

A common issue reported by sport organisations managing large SM pages is the reluctance to engage with fans due to the challenge of creating a high level of 'noise' (Stravos et al., 2014). By understanding fan responses for interacting on SM, sport organisations can develop better-targeted opportunities for interactions that are theme-based and purposeful which make posts more manageable and encourage engagement. For example, during the 2016 NBA All-Star Weekend, the NBA used Facebook Live to create live interviews between athletes and fans. The responses allowed NBA fans to express their passion, admiration and support for players and teams by creating 'authentic' access for fans and allowing direct communication between the athlete and fan. It is suggested that the characteristics of live video may allow interactions between the viewers and the broadcasters to participate in the broadcast as the events unfold (Fichet, Robinson, Dailey, & Starbird. 2016) and create an 'imagined community' (Anderson, 2006) through viewing shared experiences, where other viewers feel compelled to add to the conversation with other members of their community.

Table 2.1   *Sport Fans Motives for Interacting on Social Media*

Categories	Sub-Categories	When to use
Expertise	Analysis	Evaluation of and facts about a player or team or match
	Prediction	Evaluation of a player's or team's likelihood of success
Passion	Excitement, Joy and Frustration	Positive and negative emotions towards a player or team
	Admiration	Affection for a player or team and its appearance
Support	Identification	Perception of belonging to a player or team
	Encouragement	Act of giving a player or team support for upcoming matches
Help	Seeking knowledge	Posing questions about a player or team or match or table tennis issues in general
	Providing assistance	Responses to questions about a player or team or match or the sport issues in general
Quiz participation		Participation in quizzes
Esteem	Praise	Act of expressing congratulation and appreciation for a player's or team's performance
	Insults	Rude comments about a player or team
Camaraderie		Interaction within the community for the purpose of creating and maintaining relationships
Criticism	General controversies	Positive and negative comments in response to current sport issues
	Sport Organisation services	Positive and negative comments in response to sport organisation services

Source: Schubert and Seyffert (2017)

2.5   LIVE STREAMING MANAGERIAL PERSPECTIVES

Live video streaming can be described as the ability to broadcast video to a remote audience in the instant that it is captured (Juhlin, et al., 2010). In live video streaming:

> Transmission is accomplished using one or more kinds of communication technology that allow images and sound to be immediately sent from one location to another, enabling audiences to feel like they are present at the event (Chen & Lin, 2018, p. 293).

While applications for real-time video transmission over the internet are not new, live video through SM is a more recent phenomenon that has only recently captured the interest of mainstream. SM platforms typically offer the possibility to capture video from a mobile device or camera and share them with an online community. Rein and Venturini (2018) suggest that interactions occur mainly through text-based chats coupled with live streams, where viewers can communicate with the streamer and with other viewers. Furthermore, the combination of real-time video and chat promotes high levels of engagement and constitutes a key characteristic of social live streaming (Rein & Venturini, 2018).

The earliest social live-streaming platform was ComVu Pocket Caster which was launched in 2005, followed by Bambuser and Ustream. Research suggests users streaming through Bambuser could not find appropriate topics to stream and often suffered from poor image quality (Juhlin et al., 2010). However, Rein and Venturini (2018) suggest that it was not until 2015 that two new applications, Meerkat and Periscope, sparked a boom in the live streaming industry. The success of these applications may be due to the successful integration to Twitter

by allowing users to directly stream to their followers and promote their streams via Twitter's push notifications (Edelman, 2015).

A summary of live streaming research is provided in Table 2.2, and although there is a growing amount of research focusing on understanding the live streaming phenomenon, there is limited research on the use of live streaming in relation to the management of sport organisations. Although a variety of SM platforms with live streaming capabilities were examined, there is consensus that live streams provide an authentic and raw experience.

Table 2.2 *Research Overview – Live Streaming*

Year	Authors	SM Platform	Research Contribution
2010	Juhlin, Engstrom, &Reponen	Bambuser & Qik	Users could not find appropriate topics to stream and streams suffered from poor image quality.
2011	Dougherty	Qik	Live stream videos had civic importance, such as journalistic and activist value.
2016	Tang, Venolia & Inkpen	Meerkat & Periscope	Motivations of the streamers were mostly for self-branding purposes and provided an authentic, unedited view into their lives.
2016	Scheibe, Fietkiewicz & Stock	YouNow	YouNow users are motivated to watch live streams to chat while viewing and to reward performers with emoticons. YouNow provides anyone the chance to broadcast his or own life in real-time.
2017	Tang, Venolia, Inkpen, Parker, Gruen & Pelton	Prototype built for purpose of research	Viewers actively switched among a choice of streams showcasing different perspectives of the same event and actively interacted with each other through text comments. Live streams that featured exhibits or city sights elicited more user interaction than streams of lectures.
2017	Lottridge, Bentley, Wheeler, Lee, Cheung, Ong & Rowley	Various Platforms	Live streams are like a long-form selfie, a way to showcase an aspect of one's self and life to others
2017	Hu, Zhang & Wang	Douyu TV and YY Live	Self-identification with the broadcaster and viewing group increased the motivation for users to keep watching a live stream.
2017	Johnson, Thomas, & Fishman	Facebook Live	Views and comments on Facebook Live videos far outpaced native videos posted during the same period.

2017	Haimson, & Tang	Facebook Live, Perisope & Snapchat Stories	Live streams have four dimensions that make remote event viewing engaging: immersion, immediacy, interaction, and sociality
2018	Lu, Xia, Heo & Wigdor	Various Platforms	Viewers liked the authentic, unedited nature of live streaming and the community fostered from live streams.
2018	Siekken, Kämäräinen, Favario & Masala	Facebook Live & Periscope	Live streaming is complex and requires significant coordination between different domains of expertise (e.g., networking, multimedia, hardware) to achieve the best quality of experience.
2018	Raman, Tyson & Sastry	Facebook Live	Most social engagement actually occurs after the live stream exhibiting on-demand-style behaviour for many consumers.
2018	Rein & Venturini	Facebook Live	Facebook can shape storytelling of live streaming, both indirectly (by tweaking its feed algorithm) and directly (by sponsoring specific uses of its tools). Live streaming on SM did not evolve naturally from consumer demand but has been carefully nurtured and cultivated by the direct manipulation of technology providers.
2018	Zimmer	Periscope, Ustream, and YouNow	The most common type of live streams are topics that require little cognitive effort for preparing the stream. Although countries are culturally different, the streamers only want to chat with other people, and this does not affect the motivation of viewers or streamers.
2018	Huertas	Various Platforms	Live videos communicate far more authenticity, more emotions and promote the tourism experience more than native video. However, the study demonstrated that users use live videos only to show the positive aspects of their trips, rather than to criticize any aspect of the trip.
2019	Zimmer & Scheibe	YouNow, Periscope, and Ustream	Live streams do not call for cognitive effort, neither of the streamers nor of the viewers with most popular content categories being 'chatting, slice of life and entertainment'.
2019	Cai & Wohn	Various live streaming commerce platforms	Live streams may provide more sensory elements of a physical product that could acceptably substitute for directly individual touch and examination, Live streaming on e-commerce platforms could provide more detailed and authentic information to help customers make better decisions.
2019	Wang	Twitch	The establishment of live video streaming is not the key to success and does not indicate that effective social marketing has been achieved.

Johnson, Thomas, and Fishman (2017) conducted research on an online educational resource for radiology professionals and reported that Facebook Live posts generated more views and comments than native videos in the same collection period. A higher sense of engagement may have been achieved due to the interactivity of Facebook Live being in 'real time'.

However, Raman, Tyson and Sastry (2018) employed a data crawler to analyse 5 million broadcasts by 3.29 million unique broadcasters over a four week period, and found that "most engagement (comments, likes, shares) happen after a stream has been archived, thereby demoting the importance of the live component" (p. 2). This change of consumption setting is problematic, as what was engaging through a live stream can become boring for native video.

Furthermore, Raman et al. (2018) established that although Facebook Live encounters peaks of 63 million online viewers, popularity is typically reserved for page accounts and a small set of celebrity users. Lu, Xia, Heo and Wigdor (2018) proposed that viewers enjoy the raw and unedited feel of live streaming as "the thrilling feeling and the novelty of such streams, since such streams took place in locations where viewers seldom go to, and they knew it was real and unedited because it was live" (p. 6). Comparatively, Siekken, Kämäräinen, Favario and Masala (2018) believe live streaming is complex and requires significant coordination between networking, multimedia and hardware to provide a quality experience for viewers. Therefore, this may be an area that page accounts may be able to achieve more frequently than users who are generating live streams from their mobile device to smaller audiences and may not be able to deliver the higher quality live streams that viewers are expecting. Although there are a growing number of SM platforms providing users with the ability to broadcast and view live streams, Facebook founder, Mark Zuckerberg believes live video is the future. Facebook serves 2.37 billion monthly active users (Hutchinson, 2019), and if it was a country, it would be the largest in the world. In comparison to its competition, Wilbert (2019) suggests Facebook Live, has an edge over their competition - Periscope and Meerkat. Although all applications allow users to stream live video, subscribe to follow users, and generate conversations, Facebook may have the best feature of all - a huge audience.

Facebook is constantly evolving and innovating to provide multiple services to its growing

global audience (Sujon, Viney, & Toker-Turnalar, 2018). Facebook initially launched Live in

August 2015 on a limited basis to celebrities with a verified page. British comedian, Ricky

Gervais went live from his bathtub and attracted over 800,000 viewers. Facebook Live was

subsequently opened to all users in April 2016.

Facebook has put an emphasis on promoting Live. In an effort to boost user-generated live

video content, Facebook ran advertisements in the United States and the United Kingdom via

television and through Facebook to raise awareness for their new feature (Nudd, 2016). In

June 2016, Facebook invested $50 million (USD) and signed contracts with an estimated 140

media companies to specifically create live streaming content through Facebook (Croteau &

Hoynes, 2018). Rein and Venturri (2018) conducted a series of conversations with these

media companies and found that "while Facebook's partnerships give publishers the financial

freedom to try out an innovative format, their contractual clause dictating the high quantities

of live monthly videos make this market experiment risky" (p.13). Spayd (2016) echoed the

difficulties with producing a live broadcast:

> After watching countless hours of live video in the past few weeks, I have hit upon
>
> many that are either plagued by technical malfunctions, feel contrived, drone on too
>
> long, ignore audience questions or are simply boring, by I imagine [al]most anyone's
>
> standards (para. 9).

Despite the potential barriers for live streaming, Facebook believes that live videos are more

relevant to their users than other types of content (Kant & Xu, 2016), and has adjusted the

ranking of their newsfeed algorithm to give preference for Live content on a user's newsfeed

(Read, 2016). Adam Mosseri, Head of Facebook News Feed suggested "posts that generate conversation between people will show higher in News Feed. For example, live videos often lead to discussion amongst viewers on Facebook – in fact, live videos on average get six times as many interactions as regular videos" (Mosseri, 2018, para. 8). The concept of Facebook Live posts generating more conversation than other types is further emphasised by Mark Zuckerberg who states that

> Facebook Live is the best way to interact with viewers in real time… when you interact live, you feel connected in a more personal way. This is a big shift in how we communicate, and it's going to create new opportunities for people to come together (quoted in Cohen, 2016, para. 3).

When a page or an individual decides to 'go live', it will appear in the followers' or friends' timeline, and people who frequently engage with or recently interacted with a person or page may receive a notification. Once the live stream has finished, the video will be published to the page or profile so those who missed it can watch it later. Viewers can react, comment and share with the videos in real time, as well as once the video has been published. Facebook claims that people watch live video three times longer and comment ten times more often in comparison to native video (D'Onfro, 2016). The live-streaming company Telescope (2018) state that the average time spent viewing live video is 34.5 minutes, in comparison to 2.6 for native video, and as a result, live video averages an engagement rate of 4.3% compared to 2.2% of native video. The live-streaming company Solo16 (2017) suggests that:

> The focus of Facebook Live is a window into and interaction with a moment in time as it unfolds in real time, commenting is about being a part of a live conversation. It

exists in a way that is more dynamic and prone to evolution than commenting spaces on regular videos, and that's a powerful engagement tool (para. 2).

Moeller (2019) analysed 100 million Facebook Live and native videos published between August 2016 and August 2017. Results revealed that Facebook Live attracts more comments relative to overall interactions than native videos, which may be factored in the 'real time' aspect that live streaming offers an audience. This point is supported by Lu, Annett, Fan, and Wigdor (2017) who state that live video encourages reactions and discussion in real-time.

2.5.1   Content Relevancy

Although there is anecdotal evidence supporting the benefits of adding live-streaming to a SM strategy, there are few academic studies examining how or why people use live-streaming to experience events. Some of the exceptions include Haimson and Tang's (2017) research that focused on understanding how people experience events using Facebook Live, Periscope and Snapchat Live Stories. They identified four dimensions to explain what makes live streams engaging: immersion, immediacy, interaction, and sociality. These dimensions provide a useful conceptual framework for understanding the characteristics of Facebook Live.

Immersion is the feeling of being there through the energy and excitement of the event coming through the live stream and gaining different perspectives – such as a privileged viewpoint (front row or backstage). Centieiro, Romão, and Dias (2014) suggest the thrill and excitement felt during live sports is a unique experience, and through watching a television broadcast, fans may feel less satisfaction and more loneliness compared to attending the game live. However, by engaging fans with SM during a broadcast, sport organisations may

be able to motivate remote fans to participate and act to bring the experience to fans across the world so they can experience the atmosphere of the stadium through an innovative and engaging user experience (Centieiro et al., 2014). Through 'providing behind the scenes' content, users are able to view a different perspective that is generally not available through television broadcasts. For example, *The Washington Post* used Facebook Live to extend coverage of political debates to provide "live behind-the-scenes coverage, analysis from debate moderators in advance of and directly after the event, as well as real-time observations from Post reporters through the broadcast" (Patel, 2015, para. 4). Facebook live allows users to not only follow events on SM but allows them to see what goes on behind the scenes and provide opportunities to dive into events that traditional streaming does not allow. The Washington Post was able to use Facebook Live for users to get a feel for what the debate atmosphere was like and provide expert real-time opinions.

Immediacy describes a sense of what is happening in real time, creating a sense of unpredictability as the viewer and broadcaster do not know what will happen next. Additionally, live streams involve having access to exclusive information that cannot be found elsewhere, being one of the first to see an event as it unfolds. Rein and Venturrini (2018) established that Facebook Live videos, unlike on-demand videos, are generally not re-distributed because they achieve the best effects on social media. Therefore, the information on the videos is exciting for the viewers as they are able to experience the event immediately as it is unfolding, and it is exclusive to the broadcaster, which may in turn generate a higher level of viewers.

Haimson and Tang (2017) describe interactivity as a key characteristic of live streams, as watching native video is often a passive experience whereas live streams offer opportunities

for interaction with broadcaster and other viewers in real time through co-experience.

Hamilton, Garretson, and Kerne (2014) hypothesise that the video component allows users to share an experience, while the chat facilitates the interaction. Viewers of a live-stream are able to connect through events and feel 'part of a unique group of people that saw something special as it happened', while the interaction of the broadcaster may allow the stream to be altered via interventions, reactions, or comments from the viewers (Rein & Venturini, 2018).

Finally, Haimson and Tang (2017) describe sociality as the way live streams can be social even without the viewer interacting in any way. They state that "even when people did not know other viewers of the same event, live stream viewers sometimes created impromptu, short-term groups of people who were all viewing the same content" (p. 55). This social outcome was also found in previous live streaming research (Hamilton, et al., 2014; Hamilton, Tang, Venolia, Inkpen, Zillner, & Huang, 2016; Tang, Venolia & Inkpen, 2016; Lu, et al., 2018). Sociality makes live streams emotionally relevant as viewers often feel emotionally and socially connected to live streams involving a person or place that they cared about (Thorburn, 2017). This is an important aspect of RM for sport organisations to consider as the development of deeper emotional connections may lead to stronger attachment and loyalty of fans.

Broadcasters who want to successfully implement a live stream must plan quality content, secure a strong connection and provide meaningful interaction (Kasteler, 2016). Hudson, Huang, Roth and Madden (2015) state that "consumers that engage with their favourite brands using social media have stronger relationships with those brands compared with consumers who do not interact with their favourite brands using social media" (p. 38). Importantly, Facebook Live can be used to create relationships with brands through

storytelling (Wenzl, 2019; Pulizzi, 2012), by allowing brands to "drop the corporate veil and connect the brand with users in a more human way, which in turn allows users to take part in brand storytelling and therefore improve the user experience" (Yonata, 2017, para. 2).

2.5.2 Resourcing

Organisations may be reluctant to embrace Facebook Live due to the unscripted and unpredictability of live streaming. For example, the Association of Surfing Professionals (ASP) uses live streaming to digitally broadcast surfing competitions to a global audience. However, Nicholson, Kerr and Sherwood (2015) suggest that the unpredictability of surfing may not suit live broadcasting due to the highly variable conditions such as competitors and event organisers waiting for waves to reach an acceptable height, competition start times and finish times that are not engaging for viewers. Sarker and Silber (2019) believe that viewers often lose interest in overly long live video broadcasts:

> Because of the unscripted nature of most live video broadcasts, there are often extended periods of the broadcasts that are boring or otherwise uninteresting for viewers… Many viewers will not watch the full video broadcast, thereby resulting in a reduced audience (p.1)

However, it may be speculated that the unpredictability of live streaming may be the key feature to encourage a video to go viral. Comcowich (2016) suggests that the very unpredictability of 'live' is its real attraction and encourages "SM broadcasters to take advantage of improvisations, flexibility and a willingness to accept risks, as opposed to relying on a script" (para. 16). This unpredictability is also one of the key features of sport that make it a unique product. "The unpredictability that characterises the sport product as a

whole is actually one of the main factors of attractiveness for the public that wants to enjoy thrilling and emotional moments within the sport event"(Constantinescu, 2011, p.72). As an example, Pittsburgh Steelers' athlete, Antonio Brown, used Facebook Live to broadcast head coach Mike Tomlin's speech in the changing rooms following a win in the American Football Conference (AFC). In the video, Mike Tomlin can be heard using a derogatory term towards their opponent, the New England Patriots, and within 24 hours the video had received over 1.5 million views (Cassilo, 2019). Antonio Brown was forced to remove the video as he violated the NFL's ban on SM until after postgame interviews were conducted. However, Antonio Brown stated that he let the excitement of the win get to him and he wanted to use Facebook Live to share the moment with their fans.

Facebook proposes that streaming live is easily accessible, by suggesting users can 'broadcast to the largest audience in the world with the camera in your pocket' (Facebook, 2019a). Although, Wagner (2016) suggests that before SM people already knew what constituted a beautiful photo and tried to take one. However, with live video, no one really knows how to create 'good' live video. This point may be a concern for broadcasters and may create a barrier for live-streams, as Juhlin et al. (2015) suggests that "many users struggle with both the technology and the concept of live video and end up producing 'uneventful' videos that display low quality in terms of video production and camera use" (p. 35). This challenge was echoed by Rein and Venturini (2018) who reported amongst companies who were recruited by Facebook to promote the Live feature, all deemed investment into platforms and devices as vital investments to be able to superficially produce high quality live video. Furthermore, publishers stated they developed teams who were dedicated specifically to the production of social streams, with companies such as the *New York Times* viewing Facebook Live as a tool to advance its ongoing transition towards digital production.

While a key characteristic of SM live streaming has been identified as raw, unedited and authentic content (Huertas, 2018; Lu, et al., 2018), there is a contradiction with viewers also wanting quality, well put-together and crafted live video. SproutSocial (2019) states that raw, authentic live video makes customers feel more connected to brands and although, it does not need to be perfect, it will represent the brand and therefore organisations should provide a high-quality video. The importance of video quality was stated by live-streaming company Telescope (2018) which believes that "90% of online viewers think that video quality is the most important aspect of Facebook Live videos" (para. 8). This was further emphasised by Chen and Lin (2018) who recommended that live streaming platforms establish a professional SM team and broadcast well-designed programmes as live streams in order to increase the entertainment value. There are now multiple companies that have been established that are specialised in assisting organisations with the production of live video for social media. Organisations now have the ability to purchase or hire external streaming equipment, purchase software or hire external teams to provide social streaming solutions.

Although it may be simple for Facebook users to 'go live', not all Facebook Live videos are attracting positive attention. In the past few years, Facebook Live has received criticism for streaming suicide, torture, rape, and deaths (Eldridge & Franklin, 2019). In response to these videos, Mark Zuckerberg posted to his Facebook profile that seeing this content on Facebook was heart-breaking and Facebook would be employing an additional 3,000 staff members to an already existing 4,500-strong staff to monitor Facebook content. Not only are there issues with explicit and graphic content being live-streamed to Facebook, journalists and news organisations grapple with the ethical issues related to using this content in their reporting of the events (Eldridge & Franklin, 2019).

Most recently, a terrorist opened fire in a Christchurch mosque and used Facebook Live to broadcast the murder of 50 victims. The video was 'live' for 17 minutes and in that time was viewed by 200 people (Keall, 2019). Monika Bickett (Facebook Global Policy Vice President) reported to the *New Zealand Herald* that the Facebook AI technology did not pick up the broadcast, and there were no reports by users during the live stream. It was not until an alert came from NZ law enforcement within an hour that the video was removed from Facebook (Keall, 2019). However, although only 200 people viewed the video when it was live, Guy Rosen (Head of Facebook Integrity) reports there were more than 1.5 million attempts to re-upload the video, and media channels including TV News channels and online websites broadcast the video themselves (Hern, 2019). As a direct result of the Christchurch terrorist attack, Facebook announced that it

> 'Will now apply a 'one strike' policy to 'Live' in connection with a broader range of offenses. From now on, anyone who violates our most serious policies will be restricted from using Live for set periods of time… Our goal is to minimize risk of abuse on Live while enabling people to use Live in a positive way every day' (Facebook, 2019b, para 5).

Despite these efforts from Facebook to implement further controls on Live, Doffman (2019) believes that Facebook Live provides a broadcasting platform for extremists, murderers, the vulnerable and for the suicidal, and has major issues with content regulation. Furthermore, Grygiel (2019) suggests a major platform change is required and Facebook Live should only be offered to verified organisations, which will also allow content moderators to handle the workload.

2.6   ENHANCING FAN ENGAGEMENT

Fan engagement is a specific form of customer engagement and is a central construct for the customer relationship management of professional sports teams. Robinson, Trail, Dick, and Gillentine (2005) suggest that fans do not merely watch and purchase, but rather they are enthusiastic devotees of a given sport team. In the professional sport setting, fans often support their team in various activities such as in the stadium and following the team in the media etc. These interactions between the fan and the sport team are conceptualised as engagement, which can be defined as "a fan's investment of resources into interactions with an organisation" (Huettermann, Uhrich, & Koenigstorfer, 2019, p. 2). High fan engagement is beneficial for sport organisations, as engaged fans may generate income, high BIRGing (basking in reflected glory) and low CORFing (cutting off reflected glory; Huttermann et al., 2019; Billings, Devlin and Brown, 2016; Mudrick, Miller, & Atkin, 2016). Trail, Kim, Kwon, Harrolle, Braunstein-Minkove and Dick (2012) suggest that when teams win, fans BIRG and may want to associate themselves with the team to also been seen as successful. Furthermore, highly engaged fans have a positive influence on other consumers for example, word of mouth via SM (Kunkel, Doyle, & Berlin, 2017; Mendelsohn, 2018).

With two notable exceptions (Yoshida, et al., 2014; Huetterman et al., 2019), sport management literature provides limited categorisation of fan-engagement components and outcomes. Yoshida et al. (2014) proposed a construct of fan engagement with the focus on two axes. The first refers to fans' in-role behaviours (self-interest in attending, watching and reading news), and fans' extra-role behaviours (behaviours directed towards a sport team and other fans). The second axis refers to the sport fan as a consumer including: transaction behaviours (repurchase behaviour, media consumption, merchandising), and non-transactional behaviours (interactions with other fans and the sport organisation/other

organisations). Huetterman et al. (2019) extended this research by taking the perspective of both the fans and managers of professional sport teams, and identified the following fan engagement categories: positive fan engagement (falling into fan resource integration, fan learning and fan knowledge sharing) or negative fan engagement (falling into fan norm violation and fan resistance to the team). Sport organisations may use tactics to influence fan engagement and gauge negative or positive components of fan engagement for the benefit of the organisations using SM (Wemmer & Koenigstorfer, 2016), however neither of these constructs consider fan engagement in the SM context, which represents an important vehicle for sport organisations to interact with their fans (and vice versa).

The development of SM has influenced the way sport organisations communicate with their consumers (Gummerus, et al., 2012), as these platforms offer sport fans a place where they can interact with their teams, other fans, and to share and generate content (Pegoraro & Jinnah, 2012). Furthermore, SM platforms allow sport organisations the opportunity to develop marketing strategies that enable interaction directly with fans (Pegoraro, 2010). It is suggested that organisations should focus on posting content that elicits engagement, encourages discussion, and builds conversation with consumers (Heinonen, 2011; Sterne, 2010; Thackeray, Neiger, & Keller, 2012; Walsh, Clavio, Lovell, & Blaszka, 2013). It is suggested that organisations should create content with the focus on quality fan engagement; participation of fans, sentiments, relationships/rapport, trust and community (Aaty & Koshy, 2015). However, despite the contribution of literature to understand aspects of SM in sport organisations, there is limited understanding and empirical research on how to conceptualise and measure fan engagement through SM (Filo, et al., 2015).

Santos, Correa, Biscaia, and Pegoraro (2019) suggest that fan engagement through SM is an interactive process based on sharing personal experiences and influencing others through interactions created by the sport organisation's SM platforms. The fan-to-fan relationship is also an important concept of fan engagement through SM, as Kwon and Armstrong (2006) suggest that when individuals do not identify with a sport organisation, they are unable to form a lasting relationship with the organisation. Johnson, Massiah, and Allan (2013) indicate that highly engaged sport fans who identify with a team may feel a sense of responsibility towards other fans, and therefore the development of relationships amongst fans may promote engagement with their team and reinforce reciprocity and interaction. These concepts are consistent with previous literature (such as Carlson & O'Cass, 2012) suggesting that SM has a critical role in transactions between fans. Filo et al. (2015) suggests that SM represents an important tool for fans to enhance their interaction and knowledge of the team.

Sport organisations may increase fan engagement through sharing content that focuses on real-time information, behind-the-scenes photos or videos, exclusive announcements (Ahn, Hong, & Pederson, 2014). Accordingly, teams should boost certain features in their online platforms (e.g. sharing content about the fan pride, or the importance of interacting with other fans) to create social connections between fans and allowing mutual support (Chan & Li, 2010; Hedlund, 2014). Consequently, this content may create a sense of community and fans may feel more willing to revisit the team's SM page, support the team by engaging in positive word of mouth, and recommend the SM page to others (Santos et al., 2019). Therefore, by creating effective and superior experiences for fan engagement through SM platforms, sport organisations can create a fan base that promotes fan loyalty which may ultimately lead to positive outcomes such as increased consumptive behaviours.

2.6.1 Live Video Content

There have been a number of sporting organisations that have used Facebook Live to "give fans unprecedented access to the action, taking them on the field and into the locker room, and inviting them to interact directly with their favourite players, coaches and media personalities" (Facebook, 2016, para. 6). Through creating and sharing live video, content may not only positively influence a sport organisation's marketing efforts but may keep fans engaged. There are various opportunities through live video for sport organisations to provide engaging content that may impact fan engagement. Facebook (2016) proposes sport organisations, teams, athletes and sports media are currently experimenting with a wide variety of Facebook Live content types such as behind the scenes, questions and answers, live shows, press conferences, and live games. Brouwer (2017) expands on these content types and suggests organisations utilise live video to broadcast breaking news directly to viewers to provide discussion regarding facts 'straight from the source' as well as the organisation's thoughts or reactions to the news. Furthermore, sport organisations may use live video to broadcast events such as the showcasing of athletes active in the local community or a festival-style event that brings players and fans together. Table 2.3 provides an overview of sport organisations' use of Facebook Live and how they used Facebook Live to showcase their organisation. The table suggests there are seven types of live video content that sport organisations can utilise outside of streaming matches (behind the scenes, questions and answers, breaking news, live show, events and press conferences). Although there is a growing abundance of sport organisations utilising Facebook Live within their SM strategy, there is little known about how different types of live video content may impact fan engagement.

Table 2.3   *Example of Sport Organisations' use of Facebook Live*

Sport	Sport Organisation	Content	Type of Content
Basketball	Cleveland Cavaliers	The Cavaliers won the NBA title, and although only a select few could physically be in the locker room, the team used Facebook Live to help fans take part in the celebration. The team can be seen spraying champagne and the emotion of the win can be felt through the immersive experience of Facebook Live.	Behind the Scenes
Soccer	FC Barcelona	Immediately after the club won the La Liga title, they used Facebook Live to bring their fans onto the field with them and celebrate alongside the team as they sung their victory chant.	Behind the Scenes
Gridiron	Miami Dolphins	An athlete from the Miami Dolphins used Facebook Live to bring fans onto the field with the team and personally introduce staff and team mates on the side-lines.	Behind the Scenes
Swimming	USA Swimming	Prior to the 2016 Rio Olympics final swimming race, athlete Michael Phelps used Facebook Live to answer fans questions via comments regarding his upcoming retirement from swimming.	Questions and Answers
Gridiron	Denver Broncos	The Denver Broncos live streamed a press conference to broadcast to fans an announcement relating to an athlete's retirement.	Press Conference
Basketball	Golden State Warriors	The Golden State Warriors produced an hour-long show featuring interviews with players, as well as pre-season analysis. This show was produced specifically on Facebook and broadcast exclusively on Facebook Live.	Live Shows
Rugby League	Cronulla Sharks	The Cronulla Sharks use Facebook Live to produce four different shows throughout the NRL season; Pregame Show, Fantasy Footy Show, Monday Night Live and Shire Sports Show.	Live Shows
Gridiron	Denver Broncos	In the lead up to the Super Bowl, the Denver Broncos used Facebook Live to post interviews with various players on their thoughts regarding the upcoming game.	Interviews
Basketball	Sacramento Kings	The Sacramento Kings used Facebook Live in partnership with rapper Lil Jon to stream a fundraiser event for the Red Cross. The interactivity of the live stream encouraged others to make a donation while viewing the performance of Lil Jon.	Events

Soccer	Manchester United	Manchester United used Facebook Live to launch their new playing kit for the season. The content featured a reveal of two athletes wearing the kit and provided an interview regarding the launch.	Breaking News
Basketball	Cleveland Cavaliers	The Cleveland Cavaliers used Facebook Live to make an official announcement that Cleveland would be hosting All Star weekend in 2020. The caption encouraged viewers to tune in to the video to find out the 'special announcement' and speculation on what the announcement would be was generated by fans through the comments.	Breaking News

Source: Facebook.com

CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter provided detail on the nature of social media in the role of fan engagement, specifically Facebook Live, and current related research in this context. As SM is continuously evolving, the way in which sport organisations may create and maintain relationships is also evolving. High fan engagement is beneficial for sport organisations, as engaged fans may generate income, demonstrate high BIRGing and low CORFing behaviours. It has been identified that the impact of SM can be measured through reach and engagement. SM allows organisations to transcend traditional constraints such as location and time zones to reach and connect with a wider audience than ever before. However, there are constraints, specifically on Facebook which is encouraging pages to boost or put money behind their content, or brand pages to reach larger audiences and ultimately increase their page followers. Furthermore, the ever-changing algorithm on Facebook is an issue for organisations.

Although there is a growing body of research focusing on understanding the live streaming phenomenon, there is limited research on the use of live streaming in relation to the management of sport organisations. It is reported that live video posts have a higher level of organic reach than other posts due to the push from Facebook to promote this feature, however there is currently no academic research measuring the reach of these posts in comparison to other post types. Rather than focusing on the decline of organic reach, sport organisations may do well to focus on ways to create engagement. Engagement provides solid evidence for measuring SM usage because it is defined by action instead of simple viewing and tells the administrator what content fans are interested in. Previous research has examined Facebook engagement by measuring reactions, shares, and comments. It suggests that not all engagement is equal and has given weight to the different levels of Facebook

engagement (low engagement – reactions, medium engagement – shares, and high engagement – comments). Comments drive conversations between fans and the sport organisation, and fan-to-fan, presenting a sense of community. Furthermore, it may be suggested that comments (both positive and negative) relate to an overall increase of comments on a post. However, there are no current studies to date that understand how live video posts compare in terms of engagement to other post types. In summary, content that received the highest levels of interaction showcased behind-the- scenes content and human-interest stories (sports fans or celebrities, displaying a release of tension or solidarity, or a visual display of emotion) or the organisation's human side. Furthermore, interaction may be influenced by authenticity and may vary based on the content posted by an organisation. Schubert and Seyffert (2017) indicated eight categories that were derived from Facebook page comments of sporting organisations, which help understand the reasons for fans interacting on SM: expertise, passion, support, help, quiz participation, esteem, camaraderie and criticism. These responses were used as a framework for this study to gain understanding of how fans may be responding to live video posts.

This chapter also identified that although sport organisations are currently utilising Facebook Live within their SM strategy, there is limited research in understanding how this content may impact fan engagement. Furthermore, it was identified that there are various types of live video content available for sport organisations to utilise within their SM strategy: behind the scenes, questions and answers, breaking news, live shows, events, interviews and press conferences. The following chapter outlines the methodological approach undertaken to explore this research and gain understanding of how live video posts perform in terms of SM metrics, and how managers can use these types of posts within their SM strategy to influence fan engagement.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

This chapter outlines the theoretical framework for this multi-method case study, which included both qualitative and quantitative data, thus providing a mixed-methods approach. The specific case involved the Queensland Maroons Rugby League team and examined their SM strategy involving Facebook live-streaming in 2017 and 2018. Data collection involved social media analytics, fan responses, qualitative interviews with SM managers from QRL and a content analysis of the Queensland Maroons Facebook page. Data collection and analysis procedures are discussed per method. The chapter concludes with ethical considerations for this research.

3.1 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This research uses a multi-method case study and includes both qualitative and quantitative data, providing a mixed-methods approach. Multiple method research can be defined as "the type of research in which researchers draw on data from more than one source and employ more than one type of analysis" (Davis, Golicic, & Boerstler, 2011, p. 468). Tashakkori and Teddlie (2010) suggest that multiple method research is when "projects are conducted simultaneously or sequentially within the umbrella of the main project… and each study is planned and conducted to answer a particular sub question" (p. 196). A multi-method research approach was employed for this case study for the purpose of expansion, where multiple methods add scope and breadth to a research project (Clarke, 2005). The strength of using a multi-method design is that the findings provide a broader perspective and a different level of data on an overall phenomenon (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). However, one

challenge is the potential complexity of combining the multiple data types, and the time and resources required to make this approach possible (Driscoll, Appiah-Yeboah, Salib, & Rupert, 2007).

This case study employs both qualitative and quantitative methods. While the research is qualitatively driven, a process of simultaneous triangulation was used to add rigour to the findings. According to Morse (2003) "simultaneous triangulation represents the simultaneous use of qualitative and quantitative methods in which there is limited interaction between the two sources of data during the data collection stage, but the findings complement one another at the data interpretation stage" (quoted in Johnson, Onwuegbuzie & Turner, 2017, p. 115). The qualitative and quantitative methods were discussed with supervisors, both of whom have published articles on SM to assist in understanding and making sense of the data. A simultaneous triangulation model was used as results of the qualitative data are reported separately and are not necessarily related to confirm the results of the quantitative study.

Bryman (2006) suggests that where the quantitative and qualitative methods of a research study work in tandem, there is the possibility of multiple new insights and understandings. This was apparent when utilising a coding scheme of Facebook Live posts and then utilising the quantitative and qualitative findings related to Facebook Live to generate insights regarding the potential fan engagement opportunities of Facebook Live. Combining methods can potentially assist in overcoming a single method's validity or weakness by producing data that has its own complementary strengths (Brewer & Hunter, 1989; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Johnson & Turner, 2003; Tashakkori, Teddlie & Teddlie, 1998). Furthermore, the benefits of multiple method research are echoed by Yeasmin and Rahman (2012), who suggest that by "combining multiple observers, theories, methods, and empirical

materials, researchers can hope to overcome the weakness or intrinsic biases and the problems that come from single method, single-observer, and single-theory studies" (p. 157).

A range of both quantitative (SM analytics) and qualitative (semi-structured interviews, fan responses and content analysis) methods were combined in the research to provide conclusions in relation to how live streaming may impact fan engagement. This diversity of methods allows methodological triangulation of the diverse perspectives provided by the four different research methods used. This type of triangulation allowed a deeper perspective and may enhance the analysis and the interpretation of findings. Furthermore, this method was chosen as it may broaden the researcher's insight into the different issues underlying the phenomena being studied (Bekhet & Zauszniewski, 2012).

The use of case studies is advocated as an effective means of organisational analysis in sport management (Caza, 2000; Sharpe, 2006; Stevens & Slack, 1998). This current study follows an instrumental case study methodology as a means of better understanding one sport organisations' use of Facebook Live. Accordingly, the context of the case is analysed, and ordinary behaviours are noted in detail to help the researchers pursue the focal interest (Stake, 2003); in this case, Facebook Live. The value of a case study is found in its ability to encourage insight, illustrate issues, and generate broad understandings (Yin, 2017); however, it is not suggested that the findings can be generalised across all sport organisations. Rather it is consistent with a constructivist perspective (Guba & Lincoln, 2004), which in this case values individual perspectives to enhance understanding of Facebook Live within one sport organisation. Case study research in sport management may not only examine and solve practical issues but can also involve testing existing theoretical concepts or creating new theories (Maylor & Blackmon, 2005). Through case study research, "it may be possible to

uncover conceptual and empirical patterns that are transferable to other settings given similar contexts and conditions…when contexts and conditions differ, important additional insights into organisational capacity and its impact will be gained" (Misener & Doherty, 2009, p. 464).

This research project is a longitudinal study of the Queensland Maroons' Facebook page, and QRL that operates the page, and includes qualitative and quantitative data. Data were recorded across the 2017 and 2018 State of Origin seasons and included the following from each season: quantitative data (Facebook Insight export and Socialbakers data export) and qualitative data (semi-structured interviews and thematic coding of fan responses and live video posts). The data were exported in the same process with the same variables across each State of Origin season and interviews were undertaken with two different QRL staff members. The Queensland Maroons were selected for this study due to the convenience of the researcher being based in Brisbane and at the time of the proposal for this research, there were limited sport organisations utilising Facebook Live consistently through SMM.

Quantitative research allows the researcher to gain deeper understanding of a problem or concept to be studied and potentially generate a hypothesis to be tested (Golafshani, 2003). The emphasis of this type of research is on facts in the form of numbers that can be quantified and analysed statistically (Charles, 1998). Quantitative research is often seen as more credible by those in power. However, results often do not fully consider the political, environmental, social, technological, economic and legal context the research was produced in (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Furthermore, Yates and Leggett (2016) suggest that although quantitative analysis allows for a high degree of precision in research, it represents a

'2-D' view of findings as compared to the rich, deep descriptions offered by qualitative approaches.

Yates and Leggett (2016) propose that qualitative research helps to understand the how and why of the research question, in ways that quantitative research cannot. Qualitative research focuses on "person's lives, lived experiences, behaviours, emotions, feelings, and feelings about organisational functioning, social movements, cultural phenomena, and interactions between nations" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 11), and may provide an insightful understanding and description of the personal experiences of phenomena and helps to explore how and why phenomena occur (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

Considering that an organisation's Facebook performance is often connected to a page administrator, qualitative interview data provides an important insight alongside the quantitative data. A process rationale of mixed methods was undertaken as the quantitative data provides an account of structures, but qualitative data provides a sense of the process. In this case, Facebook administrators may be responsible for producing the SM strategy and the implementation of the content that appears on the organisation's Facebook page and although SM insight data can measure behaviours, it cannot necessarily measure why page administrations behave in a certain way. Therefore, a semi-structured interview was undertaken with two key members of QRL to gain further insight into managerial processes of Facebook Live.

Critics of qualitative methods note that data can often be easily influenced by the researcher's personal biases and can therefore lack objectivity. For example, as the researcher is an active participant through the research process of a semi-structured interview, the researcher has a

significant influence on the development and engagement of the participants (Finlay, 2003). However, Huberman and Miles (2002) emphasise the importance of implementing transparency, coherency and clarity into the qualitative research design so that results maintain the original thoughts of the participants. Through providing details about the researcher's background and interest in the topic being investigated, reflexivity has been established as one of the ways qualitative researchers should ensure rigour and quality in their work, and determine trustworthiness (Teh & Lek, 2018).

3.2   SOCIAL MEDIA ANALYTICS

3.2.1   Data Collection

The growth of SM usage allows for new opportunities for analysing several aspects of, and patterns in communication (Stieglitz, Mirbabaie, Ross, & Neuberger, 2018). SM analytics, as defined by Zeng, Chen, Lusch, and Li (2010), "are concerned with developing and evaluating informatics tools and frameworks to collect, monitor, analyse, summarise, and visualise SM data ... to facilitate conversations and interactions ... to extract useful patterns and intelligence" (p. 14). SM data, along with the progress in computational tools, has emerged as key to providing crucial insights into human behaviour, and is continually stored and processed by corporations, individuals, and governments (Manovich, 2011). The increase of social media data creates a major opportunity for organisations to develop useful knowledge and critical insights (Zeng et al. 2010). The most common uses for social media data are trend discovery, social media analytics, sentiment analysis, and opinion mining (Ghani, Hamid, Hashem & Ahmed, 2018).

To understand the reach and engagement of Facebook Live video posts in the case of the Queensland Maroons, two types of SM analytics were employed: Facebook Insights, and

Socialbakers. All analytics processes used the three-stage Capture, Understand and Present (CUP) process described by Fan and Gordon (2014). The data collection of this current research project utilised the *capture* stage to "obtain relevant social media data by monitoring various social media sources, archiving relevant data and extracting pertinent information" (Fan & Gordon, 2014, p. 5). The *understand* and *present* stages are discussed in the data analysis section. The *capture* stage involves collecting data across a variety of sources, which are then extracted for later analytical modelling and analysis. Fan and Gordon (2014) state that "the capture stage must balance the need to find information from all quarters (inclusivity) with a focus on sources that are most relevant and authoritative (exclusivity) to assist in more refined understanding" (p. 4).

All data were collected from the Queensland Maroons Facebook Page with the date filters: 22/05/2017 – 10/07/2017 and then repeated 27/05/2018 – 13/07/2018. These dates were specifically chosen as they captured the first team announcement until the end of game three across both the 2017 and 2018 State of Origin seasons.

3.2.1.1 Facebook Insights

The researcher was unable to get administrative access to the Queensland Maroons Facebook Page for the purposes of this study. However, following the qualitative interviews, QRL staff provided a copy of the Facebook Insights data with the date filter: 22/05/2017 – 10/07/2017 and 27/05/2018 – 13/07/2018. This included three data exports: Facebook Insights Data Export, Facebook Insights Data Export (Post Level), Facebook Insights Data Export (Video Level). These are three Facebook Insight reports that are available to Facebook page administrators and ensured that all data that was able to be captured was also able to be

accessed by the researcher. Appendix B describes the differences between each of these insight reports and what data was collected in each report.

3.2.1.2 Socialbakers

Several analytic online tools require administrative access to accounts to gain a high level of insight exports, which was a problem due to restricted access to the Queensland Maroons page. Socialbakers is s a global artificial intelligence powered SMM organisation that offers a software service called the Socialbakers suite with the ability to measure, compare, and contrast SMM campaigns with competitive intelligence. Socialbakers (2019) state they are

a trusted social media marketing partner to thousands of enterprise brands, including over 100 companies on the list of Fortune Global 500. Leveraging the largest social media data-set in the industry and machine learning, Socialbakers' marketing suite of solutions helps brands ensure their investment in social media is delivering measurable business outcomes (para.1).

For this research, a Socialbakers subscription allowed a deeper level of access, as well as options to analyse data across several Queensland Maroons SM platforms and compare data from similar sporting organisations. The same date filter from the Facebook Insights was applied (22/05/2017 – 10/07/2017 and 27/05/2018 – 13/07/2018), and the following data exports were downloaded; Queensland Maroons SM Overview, Queensland Maroons Video Content, Queensland Maroons Photo Content, Queensland Maroons Link Content, and Queensland Maroons Growth and Engagement. Appendix C describes the differences between each of these insight reports and what data was collected in each report.

3.2.2 Data Analysis

The *understand* phase of the 'CUP' process is the core of the entire SM analytics process. Fan and Gordon (2014) suggest that "since the capture stage gathers data from many users and sources, a sizeable portion may be noisy and thus have to be removed prior to meaningful analysis" (p. 76). The researcher employed a data mining process to narrow down data, which "includes a broad range of activities undertaken to analyse, organise, classify and make sense of such data; from counting likes and content shares to measuring reach, sentiment and key influencers, using techniques such as social network analysis, issue network analysis and natural language processing, among many others" (Kennedy, Elgesm, & Miguel, 2017, p. 271).

A data mining approach typically includes phases such as data understanding, data preparation, modelling, and evaluation (Han, Pei, & Kamber, 2011). This current study is focused on predicting the reach and impact at the Facebook page post level and is measured through several available metrics related to Facebook user interactions (reactions, comments, shares and views). Table 3.1 displays the data that was mined from the large export files and the sources of data across Facebook Insights and Socialbakers.

Table 3.1   *Social Media Analytics Data Mining Sources*

Type of Analytics Software	Data Mining
Facebook Insights	- Facebook Organic Reach - Facebook Fan Reach - Facebook Video Views
Socialbakers	- Facebook Fan Growth - Photo Content Interactions/Comments/Shares/Likes - Video Content Interactions/Comments/Shares/Likes - Link Content Interactions/Comments/Shares/Likes - User Lifetime Engagement Rate - Fan Lifetime Engagement Rate

3.2.2.1 Reach

All data analysed in this study were from post-level metrics. As this research was concerned with organic reach, all paid reach data was omitted. An Excel document was created with the headings: post type (photo, video, live, and link), date, post title, and all relevant reach data from the export file was imported (Table 3.2).

Table 3.2　　*List of Facebook Reach and Engagement Outputs*

Output	Insight	Description
Reach	Lifetime post total reach	The number of people who saw a page post (unique users).
	Lifetime Post Reach by Fan	The total number of people who liked the page and saw the post.
	Reactions	An extension of Facebook's Like button. There are six reactions: Like, Love, Haha, Wow, Sad, and Angry.
	Comments	A comment left by a Facebook user on a Facebook post.
	Shares	The share feature lets the user share the content they enjoy with personal Facebook friends.
Engagement	Fan Lifetime Engagement Rate	Engaged fans (sum of reactions, comments, shares and post clicks) divided by the total reach of a post; multiplied by 100.
	User Lifetime Engagement Rate	Engaged users (sum of reactions, comments, shares and post clicks) divided by the total reach of a post; multiplied by 100.
	Total Video Views	Total Video Views is the number of times a video has been viewed for 3 seconds or more.
	Total Watches at 95%	This metric is the number of views of a video and includes a user viewing from the beginning to 95% of the length.
	Average Video Watch Time	The average time that a video is played for, including any time spent replaying the video.

For the purpose of this research, it was deemed essential to understand average reach per post type across all the data sets. All reach data was split into tabs per post type and sorted by minimum reach to maximum reach which was then calculated to get an average per post type. Through this process, data were given a numeric minimum, maximum, and average value to

provide total reach, and fan reach per post type. Data were then presented in a table to compare post types to understand which types of post reached the highest amount of Facebook users and Queensland Maroons fans. Reliability was enhanced by replicability of the processes to confirm results (Leung, 2015).

Facebook defines post reach as the "number of people who had any posts from a Facebook Page enter their screen" (Facebook, 2018b, para. 1.). For the purpose of this research, Facebook reach is measured using the Facebook metric 'organic reach'. Organic reach is defined as the 'number of people who have seen your post through unpaid distribution' (Dodson, 2015). Facebook Insights provides measurement of reach in two ways: Lifetime Organic Reach and Lifetime Fan Reach. While Lifetime Organic Reach provides an insight of the overall number of Facebook users who have seen a post, Lifetime Fan Reach provides a measurement to understand how many fans of the specific Facebook fan page have seen a post.

3.2.2.2 Engagement

SM engagement is usually assessed with SM monitoring tools providing quantitative metrics, such as the number of likes, shares, comments, opens, views, followers, or clicks (Voorveld, van Noort, Muntinga, & Bronner, 2018). Data was downloaded from Socialbakers and put into an Excel document to create an 'ALL – Engagement' file. Vadivu and Neelamalar (2015) state there are three ways through which a Facebook user can engage with a Facebook brand page post: reactions, comments, and shares. Although there are a number of ways that users can 'react' to a Facebook post, this current research examined reactions as a sum rather than the type of reaction. This decision was made specifically as the research question aimed to understand an overall measure of engagement, rather than measuring sentiment. In the case

of the Queensland Maroons, these engagement metrics were measured per post type (photo, link, live video and native video). All engagement data were split into tabs per post type and sorted by minimum to maximum, which was then calculated to get an average per post type. Through this process, data was given a numeric minimum, maximum and average value to provide total engagements of post type. Data were then presented in a table to compare post types to understand which types of post had the highest amount of interactions, shares, comments and likes.

Vadivu and Neelamalar (2015) believe "there are still many debates on developing a concrete formula for calculating the overall engagement for a particular Facebook page" (p. 72). However, for the purpose of this study the researcher has used the official Facebook measurement of engagement rate. Facebook officially measures engagement rate with the following calculation: engaged fans or users (sum of reactions, comments, shares and post clicks) divided by the total reach of a post. This figure is then multiplied by 100 to turn it into a percentage. This insight is important as it provides a percentage of Facebook users or fans being 'reached' by a post and who are interacting with the post rather than scrolling past the post. This process was undertaken across each post type, resulting in a percentage figure for each post type to understand how many users or fans were being 'reached' and were interacting with content from the Queensland Maroons.

Video posts have their own Facebook Insight data that is not available for other post types. It is important to understand how many people view the video content, how many watch the video to 95%, and the average viewing duration. All video and live stream post data were given a numeric minimum, maximum, and average value. For the purpose of this thesis, the following Facebook Insights were used to measure video engagement: total views, and the

average viewing duration. The average viewing duration was calculated as the total watching time of a video divided by the total number of video plays, including replays. This data were used to make comparisons between live video and native video, and also to compare 2017 data to 2018 data to help understand the engagement levels of live and native video posts.

3.3   FAN RESPONSES

3.3.1   Data Collection

The research further aims to understand how Queensland Maroons fans are responding to Facebook Live posts. QRL were approached to assist in accessing Queensland Maroon fans to disseminate surveys or attend focus groups to gain an understanding on fans' perspectives of Facebook Live. However, QRL were not willing or able to provide this access for this research. Furthermore, several Facebook fan pages such as the 'Queensland Maroons Fans' page were messaged to gain access to fan databases; however, no response was received. Therefore, this section examines fans responses through comments left on the Queensland Maroons Facebook Live posts due to the ease of accessibility to this data.

A manual content analysis method to analyse all comments left on Facebook Live video posts throughout the collection period was undertaken to make sense of the data. Content analysis is a method of analysing written, verbal or visual communication messages (Neuendorf, 2016), and is a systematic and objective means of describing and quantifying phenomena (Stemler 2015; Riff, Lacy, Fico, & Watson, 2019). It is assumed that when text is formed into similar categories, text shares a similar meaning (Vaismoradi, Jones, Turunen & Snelgrove, 2016).

Comments on the Queensland Maroon's Facebook Live posts were collected for the period of 22/05/2017 – 10/07/2017 and then repeated 27/05/2018 – 13/07/2018. Data collection was assisted by using an online web tool '84code', that automatically gathers public data available on Facebook and exports into .csv format. 84code (2019) states they are a Swedish tech company dedicated to simplifying cloud infrastructure for developers. Since this research has been published, 84code no longer offers the ability to download Facebook comments due to the changes in Facebook data controls.

Table 3.3 refers to the number of Facebook Live posts and comments that were exported per collection period.

Table 3.3   *Fan Responses to Live Video*

Collection Period	Number of Facebook Live Posts	Number of Comments
22/05/2017 – 10/07/2017	34	19,824
27/05/2018 – 13/07/2018	15	7,162

A deductive content analysis was chosen which is often used in cases where the researcher wishes to retest existing data in a different context (Hossain, Saleh, & Drennan, 2017), and is used when the structure of analysis is operationalised on the basis of previous knowledge and the purpose of the study is theory testing (Kyngas & Vanhanen, 1999). Elo and Kyngas (2008) suggest that researchers should develop a categorisation matrix that is based on previous earlier research such as theories, models, and literature reviews (Sandelowski, 1995; Polit & Beck, 2004; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Zhang and Wildemuth (2009) state the advantage of using an existing coding scheme is the support of accumulation and comparison of research findings across multiple studies. In this case, a categorisation matrix (see Table 2.1) was developed based on Schubert and Seyffert's (2017) research on International Table

Tennis Federation fans' motives for interacting on SM. Elo and Kyngas (2008) state that after a categorisation matrix has been developed, all the data were reviewed for content and coded for correspondence with, or exemplification of, the identified categories (Polit & Beck 2004). The identified categorisation matrix by Schubert and Seyffert (2017) included definitions of when to use the category, which allowed the researcher to replicate and code the data, and determine exactly in what circumstances text could be coded with a category. An unconstrained matrix was utilised to allow for different categories to potentially emerge within the bounds of the current matrix.

3.3.2   Data Analysis

The researcher read through all the Facebook Live comments and applied Schubert and Seyffert's (2017) categorisation matrix to each comment. Schilling (2006) suggests that researchers need to check the coding repeatedly to prevent drifting into an idiosyncratic sense of what the codes mean. Furthermore, while re-reading the comments several times, a better understanding of the data could be gained (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). While some of the data was able to be applied to Schubert and Seyffert's (2017) categorisation matrix, some data was not able to fit within the identified categories, as it did not apply to the definitions provided.

A new categorisation matrix (Table 3.4) was developed with the addition of Broadcaster Interaction and Rallying, and removal of Quiz Participation. Broadcaster Interaction became a sub-category of Camaraderie due to the similar nature of utilising the comments to interact for the purpose of relationships. Rather than talking directly to one another, the fan is utilising Facebook Live to talk directly to the broadcaster. Rallying emerged as a sub-category of support throughout the 2018 results as fans used comments to encourage other fans to support the team when results were not favourable for the Queensland Maroons. Quiz

participation was omitted, due to the fact the Queensland Maroons were not running

quizzes/competitions through their live video posts.

Table 3.4   *Fan Responses Categorisation Matrix*

Categories	Sub-Categories	When to use
Expertise	Analysis	Evaluation of, and facts about a player, team, or match
	Prediction	Evaluation of a player's or team's likelihood of success
Passion	Excitement, Joy and Frustration	Positive and negative emotions towards a player or team
	Admiration	Affection for a player or team and its appearance
Support	Identification	Perception of belonging to a player or team
	Encouragement	Act of giving a player or team support for upcoming matches
	Rallying	Sense of bringing fans together to encourage and garner support for player or team
Help	Seeking knowledge	Posing questions about a player, team, match, or table tennis issues in general
	Providing assistance	Responses to questions about a player, team, match, or table tennis issues in general
Esteem	Praise	Act of expressing congratulations and appreciation for a player's or team's performance
	Insults	Rude comments about a player or team
Camaraderie	Fan Interaction	Interaction within the community for the purpose of creating and maintaining relationships
	Broadcaster Interaction	Interaction with the broadcaster for the purpose of creating and maintaining relationships
Criticism	General controversies	Positive and negative comments in response to current sport issues

Adapted from Schubert and Seyffert (2017)

Data was analysed again with the updated coding rules. Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest

that human coders can make mistakes when coding due to lack of understanding of

categories. With coding rules changing subtly over time this may result in inconsistency and

they suggest that coding is checked consistently. Therefore, in line with Mayring's (2014)

recommendations, a revision of the whole coding data was subsequently conducted to ensure coding rules were consistent across all data. By reviewing the data multiple times, the researcher was able to better absorb and become more familiar with the data (Guest, MacQueen & Namey, 2012).

3.4   QUALITATIVE INTERVIEWS

3.4.1   Data Collection

Baxter and Babbie (2004) define a semi-structured qualitative interview as "an interaction between an interviewer and participant in which the interviewer has a general plan of inquiry but not a specific set of questions that must be asked using particular words in a particular order" (p. 325). Thus, the semi-structured qualitative interview allows for a conversation between the interviewer and the respondent and provides freedom for the respondent to discuss their experiences as they relate to the general direction set by the interviewer. Rubin and Rubin (2011) explain that semi-structured interviews are flexible and allow interviewers the ability to gain information from respondents that cannot be directly observed or interpreted. Regarding the Queensland Maroons case study, an interview provided a way to gain an understanding of how Facebook Live was being used by QRL. These insights are directly relevant to SM usage, as there is limited understanding on how sport organisations are utilising Facebook Live.

A semi-structured interview was arranged with QRL's Senior Digital Manager to take place a month after the final State of Origin game in 2017. A follow up semi-structured interview was arranged with the QRL Digital Producer to take place a month after the final State of Origin game in 2018. In selecting participants, as per Andrew, Pedersen, and McEvoy (2011), the identification of a participant who has knowledge of the phenomenon being

investigated and their willingness to discuss the phenomenon in detail was considered. An email was sent to the Digital Media team at QRL to establish the manager responsible for Facebook Live Streaming. There were initial challenges with getting in contact with QRL as emails were unanswered and the researcher was faced with the challenge of not being able to have the input of QRL in the early stages of this research project. However, after examining the QRL staff profiles on their website, a LinkedIn message was sent to the Digital Media manager for the QRL and was advised that emails were in the spam file and an interview was scheduled with a senior manager who oversees the management of QRL's SM strategy. At this initial stage of this research, data was to be collected for one year, however a decision was made to include a second year of data which included a second interview. In the following season of data collection, an email was sent to the QRL personnel from the first semi-structured interview to schedule a time to discuss the QRL's use of live streaming throughout the 2018 State of Origin season. However, a change in personnel interviewed was instigated by the organisation, rather than as a researcher-led initiative. The researcher had indicated they wanted to interview the same staff member, however, was forwarded to another member of staff due to a high workload by the QRL at the conclusion of the 2018 State of Origin Season. Looking back, it would have been beneficial to interview the same staff member across two seasons to understand a change in thoughts over a scheduled period of time, however the two interviews provided two perspectives of implementation of live streaming within QRL SMM. The follow up interview was scheduled with another QRL staff member who oversees the direct implementation of SM strategies, rather than the management of SM, which allowed for a different perspective on live streaming.

Prior to the first interview, a literature review was completed through reading and analysing online articles related to live-streaming, Facebook Live and browsing the Queensland

Maroons' SM accounts. The following themes emerged from the literature review: Reach, Engagement, Fan Responses and Managerial Implications. Through this research, relevant questions were formulated to provide some guidelines for direction of the interview. The interview was organised around a set of predetermined open-ended questions, with other questions emerging directly from the conversation between the interviewer and respondent. Questions were formulated based on emerging trends and gaps in knowledge from the literature. The second interview was scheduled as a follow up interview regarding the 2017 State of Origin season. Interview questions were formulated on the basis of an updated review of literature and were structured based on a review of 2017 qualitative and quantitative data results. However, data were structured differently due to the prior knowledge gained by the researcher in the lead-up to the second semi-structured interview. As the researcher was informed by data collected in 2017 coupled with further literature analysis, the 2018 interview was more focused on specific areas of live streaming and QRL's strategy, rather than a broad overview of the phenomena.

Both semi-structured interviews took place late August 2017/2018, in a face-to-face interview at QRL headquarters in Brisbane, Australia, and lasted approximately 60 minutes. Each interview was recorded (with the participant's consent) on a digital device, and notes were taken for clarification. Following the interview, the researcher sent a thank you email and reminded the participant that a copy of the preliminary findings would be sent with a copy of the thesis report. Data were transcribed verbatim from the audio recording into pages of text. The researcher sent a copy of the transcript to the interviewee as a form of member checking to countercheck data to complement data triangulation (Cho & Trent, 2006). QRL staff member(s) replied with minor changes for words that were not picked up correctly

during the transcription process and verified the final transcript as a true reflection of the interview and the processes employed by QRL regarding Facebook Live.

3.4.2 Data Analysis

Each interview was downloaded from Mp3, and loaded into Happy Scribe, which is an online tool that automatically transcribes audio files using voice recognition. Once the audio file had been transcribed, a notification was emailed to the researcher. The researcher was able to open the interview transcription, playback the interview and correct any errors. The data was then compared to the researcher's handwritten notes to pick up any discrepancies. A thematic analysis was deemed essential to gain "a deeper understanding of the data to provide managerial perspectives towards live streaming" (Braun & Clarke, 2012, p.2). Using the transcript, Creswell (2003, 2007) states that the researcher needs to make 'sense' out of the interview and compile data into groups of information, also known as themes or codes. The themes and codes are consistent phrases, or ideas that occurred commonly throughout the research method (Kvale, 2007).

Each set of interview data was reviewed multiple times to gain a thorough understanding of the information by rereading the transcript and listening to the audio transcript to become intimately familiar with the data content. An inductive approach was used, which as Braun and Clarke (2012) state is "'a 'bottom up' approach and is driven by what is *in* the data...codes and themes derive from the content of the data themselves" (p. 3). Data was coded to "identify and provide a label for a feature of the data that is potentially relevant to the research question" (Braun & Clarke, 2012, p. 3). After coding the data, themes and subthemes were generated by clustering codes that had unified features which describe a meaningful pattern in the data. Data inside the themes was reviewed to ensure that all data

was meaningfully related to each other (Javadi & Zarea, 2016). A final analysis of the relationship between the data and themes was undertaken, to provide an overall understanding of the managerial implications towards using Facebook Live. This same method was replicated for each interview and a three-column table was formed for each interview with a list of themes, key findings and quotes. An excerpt of the thematic analysis table is provided in Table 3.5.

Table 3.5   *Excerpt of Thematic Analysis of Semi-Structured Interviews*

Theme	Quote	Key Findings
Resourcing	'The plan is to move away from media conferences but want to focus to extend the live broadcast feature to include more high production stuff - e.g. live show from camp. We want to lift it up more, increase the production spend/quality.'	Resources, quality of the stream, production, future use.
Content Relevancy	'It is impossible to define what is more engaging - it is more about the content.'	Engagement, content, difficulty to determine engagement, content marketing, strategic marketing plan.
Enhanced Reach and Engagement	'From last year to this year is the basic change in algorithm associated with video views on Facebook, it has become a little bit different to reach a larger audience without obviously putting money behind it – so organic reach essentially. So yeah, what we have found with the algorithm changes, it has sort of cut back reach/views etc.'	Facebook algorithm, reach, organic reach, views, paid reach, Facebook controlling reach.

As the interview in 2017 took place prior to gaining an overview of the live streaming strategy in place by QRL, it is structured slightly differently in section 4.5 in comparison to the results presented in section 5.5. Section 5.5 is guided by previous research and builds upon the 2017 interview knowledge and therefore results are presented with more quotes and a deeper level of comparison and analysis.

3.5   LIVE VIDEO THEMATIC ANALYSIS

Following the qualitative interview with QRL, it emerged there are different 'types' of live video post which may influence how fans are engaging with SM live video. A manual qualitative content analysis method to analyse all Facebook Live video posts throughout the collection periods was undertaken to make sense of the data. Vaismoradi, Turunen and Bondas (2013) suggest:

> The use of qualitative descriptive approaches such as descriptive phenomenology, content analysis, and thematic analysis are suitable for researchers who wish to employ a relatively low level of interpretation, in contrast to grounded theory or hermeneutic phenomenology, in which a higher level of interpretive complexity is required (p. 400).

This research utilised a deductive 'top down' approach and in doing so it employed a theoretical thematic analysis, which "is a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 4). This research took existing literature concepts and mapped them onto the data set (live video posts). To achieve this, seven themes related to live video posts were created based on a review of the research literature. There were no live video posts that did not fit pre-designed themes and therefore themes were identified through the work of Facebook (2016) and a content analysis of other professional sporting organisations' Facebook pages. The seven identified themes were: behind the scenes, questions and answers, breaking news, live shows, events, interviews and press conferences. As this is an emerging area of research in sport management, this method will not only help highlight the need for research in this area but also establish a baseline for future scholarly research (Misener, Darcy, Legg & Gilbert, 2013).

3.5.1 Data Collection

All live video posts posted from the Queensland Maroons Facebook page during the respective State of Origin seasons were collected (22/05/2017 – 10/07/2017and 27/05/2018 – 13/07/2018), resulting in a total of 49 live video posts across both seasons. Data was collected by viewing each individual live video post for the full duration, and then repeated to understand the context of the video's content. Notes were taken on each video and compiled into an Excel document to provide context on each live video post.

3.5.2 Data Analysis

A coding matrix was developed by using guidance from the literature (Facebook, 2016; Haimson & Tang, 2016). These categories were then piloted on other professional sport organisations not used in the current study and were expanded when deemed necessary in order to examine the type of live posts used by sport organisations. In addition, data was utilised from the qualitative interviews to assist in the coding categories where appropriate, ensuring resulting category definitions were theoretically supported and reflective of the various types of live video posts. Maxwell and Miller (2008) suggest that the most widely used categorising strategy in qualitative data analysis is coding. Through coding, data is labelled and grouped by category and then examined and compared. In this research, types of live video posts were coded as being one of the following: behind the scenes, questions and answers, breaking news, live shows, events, interviews and press conference and a categorisation matrix (Table 3.6) was developed. The categorisation matrix includes definitions of each live video content type which can be used to understand the content being viewed by the researcher and allows a theme to be applied to each live video post viewed throughout the collection period. Similar to Misener et al.'s (2013), research on Olympic legacy, the intent of this method was to undertake a thematic analysis through a systematic

review of the findings of existing literature to provide a comprehensive account of types of live videos in the sporting context. This type of systematic review can be defined as "a review in which there is a comprehensive search for relevant studies on a specific topic, and those identified are then appraised and synthesised according to a pre-determined explicit method" (Klassen, Jahad, and Moher, 1998, p. 700). The aim of this method was not to deconstruct the findings of other literature but rather aim to provide understanding of how different types of live video posts may impact fan engagement.

Table 3.6   *Live Video Content Categorisation Matrix*

Categories	Definition
Behind the Scenes	A live video for the purpose of fans having access to an area they may not generally get to s through traditional media. These types of live videos are as if 'looking through the eyes' of sport organisation, athlete or coach and provide a behind- the-scenes look into an area.
Questions and Answers	A live video for the purpose of fans using the comment section to ask questions directly to sport organisation, athlete or coach and through the sense of 'real time', questions are able read by the broadcaster and responded to throughout the live video post.
Breaking News	A live video for the purpose of providing exclusive breaking news in relation to the sport organisation to fans. Differs from a press conference as the live video is the exclusive sourc information rather than inviting media to be present.
Live Show	'Teams and sports media go live to broadcast full-length shows on Facebook. Doing so ena sports publishers to deliver interactive programming to an engaged audience' (Facebook, 2
Events	A live video for the purpose of providing coverage of an organised event to a remote audier
Interviews	A live video for the purpose of fans viewing an interview with a sport organisation professi coach, or athlete in real time. This type of live video post differs to questions and answers a does not involve interactivity from fans to ask the questions through the comment functiona but rather questions are predetermined prior to the broadcast starting.
Press Conferences	A live video for the purpose of broadcasting a press conference. Portions of these videos are usually used by media to report after sport games and used to package up highlight clips following an organised press conference or game, while this type of live video provides the press conference in real time.

Literature suggests for validity and reliability reasoning, the use of two or more coders should be used to analyse data (Ryan, 1999; Riffe, Lacy, & Varouhakis, 2008). Due to time constraints and unavailability of an independent coder the researcher acted as the sole coder for this study. There is precedent for this, with English (2017) using a sole coder to analyse 2085 Twitter posts from sports journalists covering the Australia–India Test cricket series of 2014–2015. Using a sole coder may have raised a possibility of inadvertent bias, however similarity in the pattern of findings to other live video and SM studies suggests predictive and concurrent validity. Furthermore, data was discussed with the DM from QRL to understand different types of live video posts used within SM strategy throughout the collection period to confirm the coding applied by the researcher.

3.6   ETHICS

To ensure that this research was conducted in accordance with Massey University's Human Ethics Committee (MUHEC) procedures, a screening questionnaire was completed and discussion of the ethical issues pertinent to this research was undertaken with supervisors who recommended that a 'Low Risk' ethics application be submitted. This was subsequently reviewed and recorded on the 'Low Risk Database' in the Annual Report of the MUHEC.

One of the greatest challenges for researchers in SM are ethical ones (Berry, 2004; Eysenbach, & Till, 2001). Townsend and Wallace (2016) argue "traditional ethics frameworks can inform researchers to some extent, but SM data brings new contextual challenges which the more traditional approaches are not equipped to deal with" (p. 3). Ethical issues may be:

> variable perceptions of and unclear boundaries between 'public' and 'private' spaces, as well as the difficulty of ensuring anonymity and preserving the privacy of data subjects, whose identities may not be disguised or may be easily deduced from their postings and affiliations (Taylor & Pagliari, 2018, p. 3).

This thesis provides a case study of QRL's operation of the Queensland Maroons Facebook page. QRL were advised that their identity would be explicitly documented, and they agreed that they were willing for this to occur. However, all data collected through analysing fans responses was anonymously downloaded with no names or Facebook profiles attached to the responses. These fan responses were analysed by themes and meanings and presented collectively.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter introduced the research methodology applied in the process of data collection. There are three sources of data, which have been triangulated to understand how live video may impact fan engagement for sport organisations. The first data collection consisted of SM insights. These SM insights include the use of Socialbakers and Facebook Insights to gain understanding of metrics of the Queensland Maroons Facebook data throughout the 2017 and 2018 State of Origin seasons. The second source of data was the fan comments across live video posts on the Queensland Maroons Facebook page throughout the 2017 and 2018 seasons. These data are additional sources for the analysis to understand how fans are responding to these types of videos. The method involved downloading external software and then analysing these comments and using an adaptation of Schubert and Seyffert's (2017) fan motives coding framework to make sense of the data. The third source of data consisted of interviews with two SM managers from QRL. The information obtained helped to clarify the managerial implications of live video posts and identified how live-video posts impacted fan engagement. The method of interview was face-to-face and semi-structured at the conclusion of the 2017 and 2018 State of Origin seasons. The interview questions were open-ended, including indirect questions to obtain information about QRL's views on live video posts and their use within the Queensland Maroons strategic SM plan. The final source of data included a content analysis of live video posted by the Queensland Maroons and applied themes to each of these posts that emerged from existing literature to understand types of live video content. Ethical considerations were addressed, and ethical clearance was obtained. The next two chapters provide the results from the 2017 and 2018 data set. Each focuses on examining the reach, engagement, fan responses and then managerial implications from the data collected and analysed in this study.

CHAPTER FOUR

2017 RESULTS

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

This chapter explores the use of Facebook Live by QRL on their Queensland Maroons Facebook page across the 2017 State of Origin season. The chapter begins by providing an overview of the Queensland Maroons 2017 season and indicates important aspects that may influence the season such as results, player milestones, retirements and debutants. Following this, a brief summary of the use of Facebook within the 2017 season is provided. The results of the study are then presented in terms of reach, engagement, fan responses, management implications and fan engagement in relation to the 2017 season.

4.1   THE 2017 QUEENSLAND MAROONS SEASON

The 2017 State of Origin season was the 36th annual best of three Rugby League series contested between NSW and Queensland. Prior to the 2017 season, Queensland were the current title holders, with a dominant lead over NSW, winning every series since 2006, except in 2014. Game one was held on Wednesday May 31st, 2017 at Suncorp Stadium, Brisbane. Leading up to the game, media attention was focused on NSW not only winning their first match but creating a 'dynasty' with consecutive series wins (Gould, 2017). The media picked NSW as favourites to win the series, as Queensland's 'dominance' was considered to be coming to an end, with four of the 'big name' players ruled out due to retirement or injury. The most notable players to be missing from Queensland's line up due to injury were Jonathan Thurston and Greg Inglis (Pryde, 2017a). Jonathan Thurston and Greg Inglis are among the pillars of Queensland's dynasty (Bojack, 2019), with Thurston often referred to as a GOAT (greatest of all time), representing Queensland in the State of

Origin 37 times. Craigie (2017) states 'they always say that no one's bigger than the game, but if there's any player that's going to challenge that it would definitely be JT (Jonathan Thurston) because every kid in Australia or in the world that plays rugby league wants to be Thurston' (para 6). Similarly, Greg Inglis was part of the most dominant team in the State of Origin series, representing Queensland 32 times and winning 10 series between 2006 and 2016.

At the commencement of the 2016 State of Origin series, Jonathan Thurston announced that the 2017 State of Origin series would be his final Queensland representative honours (Ryan, 2017), fuelling speculation that he would be a late addition to the game one line-up. Suspense was built through a Facebook Live video broadcast by the Queensland Maroons Facebook page on 30th May, 2017. This video provided behind-the-scenes access for fans to see the 'Captains Run' – the final training session prior to game one. Comments were focused on fans hoping to get a glimpse of Jonathan Thurston training to aid speculation that he would be running out with the team the following evening. However, he was not spotted in the video and did not play. Prior to the game, the Queensland Maroons utilised Facebook Live to open up access to fans by allowing them to tune in from anywhere in the world. Fans were able to see the 'join the team walk' around Brisbane's iconic South Bank, and 'the arrival' of the team on the bus to the stadium and setting up in the changing rooms. This level of access had not previously been provided to Queensland Maroons fans and allowed fans to have a deeper insight into the team's lead up to State of Origin.

However, NSW proved too strong for a 'weakened' Queensland side, and secured a dominant victory over Queensland 28-4, to win their first series opener since 2014. In State of Origin contests, winning a game at the opposition's home ground is considered a significant

advantage, as the following game is a home game. Therefore, the media suggested that NSW had what was needed to end Queensland's streak, "The horrendous decade-long dynasty is just 80 minutes from ending. It's time for Queensland — minus four big-name stars — to start feeling some of our pain… This was NSW's biggest ever win at Suncorp stadium" (Ritchie, 2017a, para. 12).

Game two was held on Wednesday June 21st, 2017 at ANZ Stadium, Sydney. This game was a 'must win' for Queensland, as a win would force the series to a tie-breaker back at Suncorp Stadium. The Queensland Maroons utilised Facebook Live to live stream a press conference to announce that the team would be boosted by the return of Jonathan Thurston after overcoming a shoulder injury. Facebook Live was once again used to open access to Queensland Maroons fans by allowing fans to join the team for their fan day, player interviews, team walks and to travel on the bus with the team to the game.

A sold out ANZ Stadium created a 'sea of blue' with the hopes of NSW securing an early series victory. However, Queensland spoiled NSW hopes and a try by Dane Gagai levelled the score 16-16 with three minutes remaining. Returning from injury, Jonathan Thurston slotted the conversion over the posts and put the Queensland Maroons ahead 18-16 to win game 2. As media reported, "it silenced the sell-out crowd of 82,259 and set up an epic decider in Brisbane" (Ritchie, 2017b, para. 2).

Game three was held on Wednesday 12th July, 2017 at Suncorp Stadium, Brisbane. In the lead up to the game, media referred to it as setting the stage for the biggest decider in State of Origin history (Pryde, 2017b). A damaging tackle to Queensland player Jonathan Thurston in game two meant that he would be unavailable for his final State of Origin representative

game, and he was also ruled out of the remainder of the 2017 NRL season. Thurston described his Queensland Maroons injury via Facebook Live on the Queensland Maroons official page, by stating "what a way to go out in the Origin arena, in enemy territory, kicking that winning goal to send the series into a decider" (Santarossa, 2017). The absence of Thurston from the State of Origin Queensland side for game three meant Cameron Munster was brought into the side, and for the first time in history, the Queensland Maroons spine (Rugby League term for positions; fullback, five-eighth, half-back, and hooker) was provided from the same club – the Melbourne Storm (Pryde, 2017b). NSW announced an unchanged line up to go into game 3, 2017 hoping to win a series decider in Brisbane for the first time since 2005. In the lead up to the game, Facebook Live was utilised to offer Queensland Maroons' fans an insight into three training sessions, player interviews, team walks and to travel on the bus with the team to the game.

The Queensland Maroons defeated the NSW Blues 22-6 at Suncorp Stadium in front of a sold-out Queensland home crowd of 52,540 fans. The media (Pengilly, 2017) showed the frustration of NSW fans the following day with the opening line 'State of Origin is almost dead. If NSW couldn't win this year, then when?' after Queensland secured their eleventh State of Origin series in twelve years. Following the series win, the Queensland Maroons used Facebook Live to provide open access to their fans in the changing rooms of the team celebrating their series victory. This content is usually not available for fans, as once the television broadcast ends, the access for fans ends.

4.1.1   The 2017 Queensland Maroons Facebook Overview

The data mining process began by breaking down the type of Facebook posts that were posted during the period 22/05/2017 – 10/07/2017 on the Queensland Maroons Facebook

page. Facebook posts ($n = 184$), included four different types of posts to analyse - video ($n = 40$), live video ($n = 33$), photos ($n = 52$) and links ($n = 59$). The Queensland Maroons did not make any status/text posts during this period. The Queensland Maroons posted a total of 33 Facebook Live video posts during the collection period. Table 4.1 provides details about what each of these videos contained.

Table 4.1 *Facebook Live content posted by the Maroons (22/05/2017 – 10/07/2017)*

Date	Time (AEST)	Content Title	Content Description	Length of Video (Min:Sec)	Content Type
22nd May 2017	1300	LIVE - XXXX Queensland Maroons team announcement.	A press conference featuring the Queensland Maroons coaching staff announcing the squad ahead of State of Origin, Game 1, 2017.	17:15	Press Conference
24th May 2017	1014	JT fronts the media from camp.	A press conference featuring Jonathan Thurston making a statement regarding his injury and selection for the upcoming game.	11:15	Press Conference
25th May 2017	1040	Inside Camp Maroon! JT, Cronk and Chambers will answer the burning questions.	A press conference featuring Queensland Maroons players Jonathan Thurston, Cooper Cronk and Will Chambers answering media questions ahead of State of Origin Game 1.	28:27	Press Conference
26th May 2017	1147	New addition and a familiar face. Jarrod Wallace and Jacob Lillyman front the media.	A press conference featuring Queensland Maroons players Jarrod Wallace and Jacob Lillyman answering media questions ahead of State of Origin Game 1.	14:41	Press Conference
28th May 2017	1625	We have arrived to Maroon Festival☺😄 Thanks to Star Entertainment Group.	The Queensland Maroons team arriving to a fan day at South Bank, Brisbane. The video shows the team arriving on a ferry and walking into a crowd of fans.	4:27	Behind the Scenes
29th May 207	952	Cameron Smith fronts the media as he prepares for his 40th Origin appearance.	A press conference featuring Queensland Maroons player Cameron Smith answering media questions ahead of his 40th State of Origin game.	24:25	Press Conference

30th May 2017	1542	LIVE from Suncorp Stadium. Game 1 Captain's Run.	Behind the scenes at the Queensland Maroons training session showing the team running through drills.	4:24	Behind the Scenes
30th May 2017	1609	It's time for the Captain's Run! Kevin Walters updating the media ahead of Game 1.	A press conference featuring Queensland Maroons coaching staff answering questions from the media.	10:36	Press Conference
31st May 2017*	1045	The final word! Anthony Seibold speaks to the media for the final time before State of Origin Game I.	A press conference featuring Queensland Maroons coaching staff answering questions from the media.	8:34	Press Conference
31st May 2017*	1108	Join the team walk	The Queensland Maroons team going for a walk around South Bank, Brisbane	3:46	Behind the Scenes
31st May 2017*	1830	The Arrival	The Queensland Maroons bus arriving at the stadium and showcasing the players getting off the bus and walking into the stadium ahead of Game 1	3:04	Behind the Scenes
13th June 2017	1700	JT is back!	Press conference featuring Jonathan Thurston addressing media regarding his injury and selection ahead of Game 2	5:16	Press Conference
13th June 2017	1710	Thoughts on Origin 41	Press conference featuring Cameron Smith answering media questions regarding his 41st State of Origin appearance	5:30	Press Conference
14th June 2017	1132	Mackay, We're here! It's the Mackay Fan Day 207 presented by Suncorp	The Queensland Maroons appearing for a fan day in Mackay. The video showcases the athletes engaging with fans, and signing merchandise	5:31	Events
15th June 2017	1141	They (nerves) haven't kicked in yet	Press conference featuring Queensland Maroons player Jarrod Wallace answering media questions	3:43	Press Conference
18th June 2017	1015	Sneak Peak - Camp Maroon	Behind the scenes at a Queensland Maroons training session running through training drills and warm up exercises	5:52	Behind the Scenes
18th June 2017	1150	-	Press conference featuring Queensland Maroons athlete Gavin Cooper answering media questions	7:45	Press Conference

20th June 2017	1535	The final word	Press conference featuring coaching staff answering media questions ahead of State of Origin Game 2	7:46	Press Conference
20th June 2017	1557	Sneak Peak - Captains Run	Behind the scenes at a Queensland Maroons training session running through training drills and warm up exercises	2:02	Behind the Scenes
21st June 2017*	1112	Good Morning! Team walk to kick start game day proceedings	The Queensland Maroons on a team walk in a local park ahead of game day	1:47	Behind the Scenes
21st June 2017*	1126	The final media availability ahead of tonight's game with Anthony Seibold	Press conference featuring coaching staff answering media questions ahead of State of Origin Game 2	2:20	Press Conference
21st June 2017*	1833	The arrival	The Queensland Maroons bus arriving at the stadium and showcasing the players getting off the bus and walking into the stadium ahead of Game 2	2:47	Behind the Scenes
3rd July 2017	1257	Our team for Origin III has been named.	A press conference featuring the Queensland Maroons coaching staff announcing the squad ahead of State of Origin, Game 3, 2017	12:07	Press Conference
4th July 2017	1609	Ready to roll for the first session of Camp 3	Behind the scenes at a Queensland Maroons training session running through training drills and warm up exercises	7:48	Behind the Scenes
5th July 2017	1251	Always Classy - Cooper discusses Origin III preparations, who his halves partner is, JT legacy and RLPA negotiations	Press conference featuring Queensland Maroons athlete Gavin Cooper answering media questions ahead of State of Origin Game 3	9:14	Press Conference
6th July 2017	1130	How does Michael feel about his shift to the centres?	Press conference featuring Queensland Maroons athlete Michael Morgan answering media questions regarding a change in position ahead of State of Origin Game 3	6:38	Press Conference
7th July 2017	1006	Where did the sunshine go? The show must go on!	Behind the scenes at a Queensland Maroons training session	6:38	Behind the Scenes

7th July 2017	1117	Rain, Hail or Shine	Behind the scenes at a Queensland Maroons training session running through training drills and warm up exercises	4:04	Behind the Scenes
9th July 2017	1017	Sunday in the Office - Where are you watching from?	Behind the scenes at a Queensland Maroons training session running through training drills and warm up exercises	6:10	Behind the Scenes
9th July 2017	1149	Val fronts the media following an eventful field session	Press conference featuring Queensland Maroons athlete Valentine Holmes answering media questions regarding a player's injury during training ahead of State of Origin Game 3	3:17	Press Conference
12th July 2017*	1108	Looking Relaxed	Behind the scenes content of the Queensland Maroons kicking a football at a local park	3:20	Behind the Scenes
12th July 2017*	1813	The Arrival	The Queensland Maroons bus arriving at the stadium and showcasing the players getting off the bus and walking into the stadium ahead of Game 3	2:47	Behind the Scenes
12th July 2017*	2250	Celebrate in true Queensland Style	Behind the scenes content of the Queensland Maroons team in the changing rooms after winning the 2017 State of Origin season. The video features a speech by Cameron Smith, and the team singing their victory song	4:57	Behind the Scenes

Note: * denotes a Facebook Live post that was posted on game day by the Queensland Maroons Facebook page

4.2 REACH

The results in Table 4.2 show that Facebook video posts have the highest organic reach (n = 235,970) and reach to fans (n = 178,815) compared to any other type of Facebook post. Live videos are the lowest performing in terms of reaching fans (n =113,440). However, beside native videos, live video posts have the highest organic reach (n = 178,857), a figure notably higher than photos, and link posts.

Table 4.2   *Lifetime Organic and Fan Reach per Post type (22/05/2017 – 10/07/2017)*

Type of Post	Minimum	Maximum	Average	**Rank**
Organic Reach				
Video	53,636	1,294,361	235,970	1
Live Videos	61,994	630,681	178,857	2
Photos	71,623	281740	162,182	3
Links	51,605	743,219	133,742	4
Fan Reach				
Video	53,276	492,212	178,815	1
Live Videos	52,687	386,874	113,440	4
Photos	74,194	342,847	161,048	2
Links	51,186	299,953	120,686	3

4.2.1 Content Relevancy

When collecting data across the collection period, results show that the type of content posted appears to influence the total reach of a post (Table 4.3). Although live video posts have a lower average reach than other post types, the live video post 'Celebrate in true Queensland Style' was the fourth highest total reach post of all content posted in this period. Furthermore, most of the content across all post types was focused on providing fans opportunities to celebrate the success of the Queensland Maroons team or athletes.

Table 4.3 *Top Ten Overall Posts by Lifetime Total Reach (22/05/2017 – 10/07/2017)*

	Type of Post	Date	Title	Content Description	Total Reach
1	Video	28th June 2017	Sit back. Relax. Enjoy! 👏 #QLDER	A montage of Jonathan Thurston's State of Origin on-field highlights.	2,700,037
2	Video	10th July 2017	He is one of the greatest players the game has ever seen. Probably the greatest... 🌐 #QLDER	A video with interviews of past and present Queensland Maroons athletes and coaches talking about Jonathan Thurston juxtaposed with playing highlights from Jonathan Thurston's State of Origin career.	2,169,966
3	Photo	30th May 2017	Cameron Smith's 40th State of Origin jersey. 🏉🌐 #QLDER	A photo of Jonathan Thurston presenting Cameron Smith with his 40th State of Origin jersey.	1,869,238
4	Live Video	12th July 2017*	Celebrate in true Queensland style!	Behind-the-scenes content of the Queensland Maroons team in the changing rooms after winning the 2017 State of Origin season. The video features a speech by Cameron Smith, and the team singing their victory song.	1,761,623
5	Photo	22nd June 2017	Never say die. #QLDER	Photo of Queensland Maroon athletes - Gavin Cooper with Cameron Smith, looking bruised and battered after winning State of Origin Game 2.	1,506,256
6	Video	12th July 2017*	That was pretty special. #QLDER	A video of Queensland Maroons players Jonathan Thurston and Cameron Smith lifting the State of Origin shield after winning the 2017 State of Origin series.	1,393,726
7	Link	12th June 2017	The #QLDER team to play NSW in Game 2 of the State of Origin series has been named.	A link to QRL website to an article providing the squad list for the Queensland Maroons ahead of State of Origin Game 2.	1,061,463
8	Photo	10th July 2017	Cam Smith x2! 🙂 ⛳ One is ranked 151 in the world 🏌 The other is ready for his 42nd State of Origin 🏠 Both are Queenslanders! #QLDER	A photo of Queensland Maroons athlete Cameron Smith with Australian PGA Golfer Cameron Smith.	1,060,967
9	Photo	31st May 2017*	Congratulations Cooper Cronk! An elite club. Dick 'Tosser' Turner medallist. 20 Origin games. 🌐 #QLDER	A photo of Cooper Cronk celebrating his 20th State of Origin game	931,194
10	Photo	20th June 2017	Moments like this. #QLDER	A photo of Queensland Maroons athlete Billy Slater walking off the field and into the changing rooms with his son after State of Origin Game 2	906,546

Note: * denotes a Facebook post that was posted on game day by the Queensland Maroons Facebook page

However, it is important to note that measuring reach on Facebook can be misleading as it is only showing how many users may have a seen a post. In comparison, engagement gives a more accurate picture of actual viewers based on reactions, shares or comments. Therefore, the following section will focus on the Queensland Maroons' Facebook post engagement.

4.3   ENGAGEMENT

The following section examines and compares engagement of the Queensland Maroons Facebook post types as reactions, shares and comments across the collection period. Table 4.4 shows the comparison between each of these post types and the varying differences between the type of post and the type of engagement.

Table 4.4   *Lifetime Engagement per Post Type (22/05/2017 – 10/07/2017)*

Type of Post	Minimum	Maximum	Average	Rank
Reactions				
Video	202	43,240	6,050	2
Live Videos	484	30,970	2,816	3
Photos	629	45,180	9,655	1
Links	172	8,670	1,806	4
Shares				
Video	0	9,860	1,091	1
Live Videos	17	6,130	315	3
Photos	14	13,290	984	2
Links	3	910	116	5
Comments				
Video	0	5,550	476	3
Live Videos	92	4,840	567	2
Photos	25	4,229	596	1
Links	8	220	208	4

4.3.1 Reactions

Facebook users can react to a Facebook post using one of six emotional reactions: like, love, haha, wow, sad and angry. To use the reactions, users will need to hover their cursor (on desktop) or hover their finger over the 'like' button (on their mobile device) and select the type of reaction they would like to use. Table 4.4 shows a summary of these reactions across the Queensland Maroons Facebook page per type of post across the period, with photo posts encouraging the highest average reactions ($n = 9,655$), followed by videos ($n = 6,050$). Live video posts received fewer reactions on average ($n = 2,816$) than other post types and only slightly more than link posts ($n = 1,806$).

4.3.2 Shares

Shares are an important measure of engagement, as they reflect how Facebook users interact with the relevant post and therefore potentially increase the organic reach of a post (and are almost a pseudo measure for virality). Table 4.4 provides an overview of the types of posts and the average number of shares across the Queensland Maroons Facebook page throughout the period, with native videos ($n = 1,091$) being the type of post that was shared by Facebook users more than others. In comparison, live video posts, on average, were only shared 315 times.

4.3.3 Comments

In the case of the Queensland Maroons, while Facebook users are reacting and sharing Facebook Live posts less than other types of post, live video posts encourage a higher frequency of comments. This may potentially suggest that Facebook users are using live video posts to communicate with the brand, team or athlete by having a direct line or voice with the team in real time. Table 4.4 shows the Queensland Maroons Facebook pages'

average comments per post type across this. Facebook Live video posts averaged 567 comments – only slightly behind photo posts ($n = 596$). However, the minimum number of comments a Facebook Live video received was 92, which is higher than any other type of post. As Facebook is putting more emphasis on 'meaningful interactions' and encouraging users to engage with Facebook posts through comments, it may be the case that brand page administrators can use Facebook Live video to encourage users to engage with a Facebook post and possibly work with Facebook's algorithm rather than against it.

4.3.4 Engagement Rate

As engagement can be measured in numerous ways, for the purpose of the research question, engagement was measured by using Facebook's engagement rate, which is calculated using '*Lifetime Users Engaged per Post Type*' and dividing the post type average by the **'***Lifetime Post Organic Reach*' post type average. In the case of the Queensland Maroons Facebook page, video posts ($n = 14.3\%$) and photo posts ($n = 14.2\%$) generate the highest level of engagement amongst users. In comparison, live video posts are engaging a much smaller percentage of audience ($n = 8.4\%$), followed by link posts ($n = 6.2\%$). In comparison, fan engagement was measured by using '*Lifetime Fans Engaged per Post Type*' and dividing the post type average by the '*Lifetime Post Reach by Fans*'. During the period, Queensland Maroons fans were more actively engaged by video posts ($n = 10.6\%$) and photo posts ($n = 10.1\%$). Live video posts engaged a much smaller percentage of audience ($n = 8.7\%$), followed by link posts ($n = 6.0\%$).

Results show that the type of content posted appears to correlate to the total engagement level of a post (Table 4.5). An engaged user is measured through a sum of total reactions, shares, comments and post clicks.

Table 4.5 *Top Ten Overall Posts by Lifetime Engaged Users (22/05/2017 – 10/07/2017)*

	Type of Post	Date	Title	Content Description	Total Engagement
1	Video	28th June 2017	Sit back. Relax. Enjoy! 🍺 #QLDER	A montage of Jonathan Thurston's State of Origin on field highlights.	275,230
2	Video	10th July 2017	'He is one of the greatest players the game has ever seen. Probably the greatest...' 🌐 #QLDER	A video with interviews of past and present Queensland Maroons athletes and coaches talking about Jonathan Thurston juxtaposed with playing highlights from Jonathan Thurston's State of Origin career.	226,524
3	Live Video	12th July 2017*	Celebrate in true Queensland style!	Behind-the-scenes content of the Queensland Maroons team in the changing rooms after winning the 2017 State of Origin season. The video features a speech by Cameron Smith, and the team singing their victory song.	225,279
4	Video	12th July 2017*	That was pretty special. #QLDER	A video of Queensland Maroons players Jonathan Thurston and Cameron Smith lifting the State of Origin shield after winning the 2017 State of Origin series.	132,788
5	Photo	24th May 2017	Give your profile photo the Queensland Treatment	A photo post encouraging Facebook user to add a Facebook frame to their profile photo which says 'Go the Maroons'.	121,603
6	Photo	13th June 2017	Where did the Sunshine Go?	A series of photos of the Queensland Maroons training in the rain through State of Origin camp.	107,877
7	Photo	13th June 2017	See You Soon, Mackay!	A 360-degree image of the Queensland Maroons team bus parked next to an aeroplane ready to take the team to a fan day in Mackay.	97,515
8	Photo	23rd May 2017	When you meet your hero <3 Thanks, JT!	A photo of Queensland Maroons athlete Jonathan Thurston at the airport having a photo with a young Queensland fan.	87,934
9	Link	24th May 2017	Official Statement - Johnathan Thurston Injury	A link to QRL website regarding an official statement about Queensland Maroon athlete Jonathan Thurston's injury and his selection availability for State of Origin Game 1.	83,810
10	Video	1st July 2017	Where were you when Alfie made his return!? #QLDER	A video highlights package of retired Queensland Maroons player Alfie Langer making his return to State of Origin for the Queensland Maroons.	75,219

Note: * denotes a Facebook post that was posted on game day by the Queensland Maroons Facebook page

Although live video posts have a lower average engagement rate than other post types, the live video post 'Celebrate in true Queensland Style' was the third highest total post for 'engaged users' across all content posted in this period. However, this was the only live video post to appear in the top ten content across the research period. Furthermore, similar to Reach results, most of the content across all post types was focused on providing fans opportunities to celebrate the success of the Queensland Maroons team or athletes.

4.3.5   Views

As video content is unique in comparison to other post types, it is important to understand video metrics that are not available on other types of Facebook posts (photo, link, and status). Throughout the research period, on average video posts ($n = 140,599$) were viewed more than live video posts ($n = 54,584$), which is consistent with the level of reach of video posts in comparison to live video posts.

However live video posts, on average, were recorded for 7:31 minutes in duration and users were viewing live video posts for 5 minutes. This may suggest that Facebook users are more engaged in live video and due to the nature of live video, as it is happening in the moment, live video has a sense of unpredictability that may entice viewers to keep watching as anything may happen at any moment.

4.4 FAN RESPONSES

The following section examines the comments left by Queensland Maroons fans during the collection period across 33 live video posts on the Queensland Maroons Facebook page. Table 4.6 provides a breakdown of each of these comment themes and provides a description and an example quote to understand the context of each of these themes. All exemplar quotes used in this section have been provided verbatim.

Table 4.6 *Fans' Live Video Comments by Theme (22/05/2017 – 10/07/2017)*

Theme	Description	Illustrative Example	Number of Comments	Rank
Support			**7,824**	1
Identification	Comments related to belonging to a player or a team.	*Once a Queenslander, always a Queenslander, awesome to see the Walters Brothers still in the mix, good luck brothers, all the way from Kaitaia Northland New Zealand, Tahana-Masters whanau....*	*2,363*	
Encouragement	Comments used by fans to send their support and wishes for upcoming matches.	*All of Queensland is cheering for you QUEENSLANDER!!! Do it with pride and passion!!!*	*5,461*	
Camaraderie			**3,809**	2
Fan Interaction	Comments focused on social interactions not generally related to players, coaches, teams or the sport in general. May often be used to 'tag' a friend as a form of sharing a video.	*I was just about to share this for you.*	*2,280*	
Broadcaster Interaction	Comments for the purpose of communicating directly with the broadcaster by either talking to the broadcaster or the team, athlete or coach on the camera.	*Though I won't be watching this game (I have an urgent meeting with Deaf Society), I will be thinking of you and cheering you on in my heart. This game belongs to Queensland.*	*989*	
Esteem			**2,516**	3
Praise	Comments used to congratulate a team or athlete's performance. Most often used after a team's win, or to celebrate a player or coach's career milestone	*Thank you guys for an amazing game and for doing us proud yet again. Thank you Kevvy Walters!!! You are a dead set legend. Love to you all*	2,330	

Insults	Comments that are abusive towards a player, team, or coach, often aggressive, offensive, emotional and critical.	*Biggest pack of grubs I've seen in the one room.*	186	
Passion			**2,234**	4
Excitement/Joy /Frustration	Comments showing the emotional attachment to a player, coach or team; these comments could be positive or negative and are often influenced by players or team results.	*HOW GOOD IT' FEELS TO BE A QUEENSLANDER.*	*1,320*	
Admiration	Comments related to showing affection, approval and respect for a player or team.	*A team full of legends! True grit, mateship and that never say die attitude. Just brilliant!*	*914*	
Expertise			**810**	5
Analysis	Comments related to fans exchanging and discussing their thoughts, and opinions from their points of view towards players, coaches and the team.	*The guard is slowly starting to change. This was always going to happen eventually. This team will not necessarily be the team that plays the entire series. All I can say is we still have some good players there who were not picked if any injuries occur in game 1. It's best to start blooding new players now while the older players like Smith Cronk, Thiaday etc. are still in the side so they can educate these young guys on the culture of the side and what it means to be a part of it.*	*590*	
Prediction	Comments related to fans expressing their points of view, thoughts and opinions on upcoming matches, including predictions towards players and results.	*Queensland 13+*	*220*	
Help			**280**	6
Seeking Knowledge	Fans utilising comments to ask the Facebook community questions about a player, or team or general rugby league issues.	*What time does it start? Or in how many hours does it start as I'm in the UK? X*	*144*	
Providing Assistance	Fans using comments to respond to questions posed by the Facebook community regarding players, teams, or rugby league issues	*Watch the game live and free online at http://watchstateoforiginonline.com*	*136*	
Unable to Code	Single letters, non-words or blank comments.		**2,351**	
Total Comments			**19,824**	

4.4.1 Support

The most common response to Facebook Live posts was in the form of support (*n=7,824*). Fans used live video posts to leave comments that conveyed a sense of belonging to a player or team (e.g. '*I bleed Maroon!*'), identifying themselves or location (e.g. '*From Papua New Guinea GO MAROONS FOR LIFE #DIEHARD*'), and to send support and wishes for upcoming games (e.g. '*Go boys, we are all cheering for your success and good luck to the new first timers. Bring it on home*'). As QRL used Facebook Live for the purpose of extending the fan experience by providing Queensland Maroons fans an opportunity to gain an insight into the backstage areas in the lead up to State of Origin games, these types of videos may have aided in the support-based responses by fans. For example, previously fans may have seen snippets of the Queensland Maroons bus arriving at Suncorp stadium in the television broadcast pre-game coverage, or QRL may have used a photo post to indicate the team had arrived at the stadium. However, the live video post showed coverage of what the Queensland Maroon players were doing in 'real time' and allowed fans to have a forum to send their messages of support to the team only moments before they played (e.g. '*Woooohooo lets go boys! GOOD LUCK... we got this* ☺☺☺☺ *love the uniform and bags! FLASH AS BUS!!*').

The most common supportive comment was often generically directed at the team (e.g. '*Go Queensland, Go Maroons or Go Team*') and appeared 2,551 times throughout the period. This may be due to the fact the live videos were pre-origin, rather than post-origin and allowed fans to send their messages of encouragement to the team in the lead up to a game. Although QRL, or Queensland Maroon athletes/coaches did not respond to these messages either by replying to comments or addressing fans through the broadcast, fans were still motivated to send their wishes to the team in the lead up to the game. It may be suggested

that Facebook Live provides a sense of immediacy and real time interaction that other types of post cannot provide.

The casual and unfiltered feel of live video posts may influence the relationship between athlete and fan as supportive comments often used a player's first name, showing a sense of familiarity and a high level of attachment to the team. Therefore, there was potentially a more personal relationship demonstrating a deeper emotional connectedness, e.g. '*Great interview Cooper. I hope you get a great send-off next week with a resounding win!!'* Through Facebook Live, there are opportunities to greatly enhance the relationship between the athlete and the fan. Although athletes aren't responding to fans through Facebook Live, fans may feel more connected to an athlete through a sense of trust and loyalty. For example, rather than external media posting a news article or statement relating to an athlete, Facebook Live allows the fan to hear the words directly out of the athlete's mouth in real-time. This means a sense of authenticity may be created as the video is not edited to create a story, set a specific agenda or provide mixed messages.

4.4.2 Camaraderie

Camaraderie ($n = 3,809$) relates to online social interactions and is focused on creating and maintaining relationships. These results differed to previous research by Schubert and Seyferrt (2017) as this category was split into Fan Interaction and Broadcaster Interaction. Although fans can comment on all types of posts and have a sense of interacting with the sport organisation or athlete, live video posts have a sense of interactivity as fans can see their favourite athletes in 'real-time' creating a sense of immediacy, viewing the action as it unfolds. They know their favourite athlete is directly on the other side of the camera and there may be a chance for them to read their comment and interact with the fan. Comments

were focused on interacting with the Facebook Live broadcaster (in this case QRL or the Queensland Maroons team) with instant feedback regarding the quality of the stream or for the purpose of interacting directly with an athlete or coach in real time during the stream, e.g. '*Queensland Maroons can you give me a heads up why Corey Norman keeps getting overlooked*' or '*audio not coming through*' Although the Queensland Maroons audience was directly interacting with Facebook Live posts, the Queensland Maroons did not use the platform to interact back with a user during live streaming, which may be a missed opportunity for further engagement. Fans did not appear to be annoyed that there was a lack of response from the Queensland Maroons and often comments that may have been directed to the broadcaster were replied to by other fans, e.g. '*Where is Billy Slater? Is he retiring?*'

Fans provided feedback to QRL, e.g. '*Loving the live streams*' and '*Thank you for these live feeds guys. Really appreciate it. #QLDER*', regarding their use of the live video feature. The majority of feedback was positive with fans letting the organisation know they appreciated the insight into the lead up to Origin. However, there was only one negative comment, '*No more going live boys. Get to winning! Sick of hearing excuses.*' Some fans believe that the use of live video takes away from the team training, and focus should be put on the game rather than providing content for fans. However, the majority of feedback emphasised the excitement of this feature being used by QRL and fans were thanking the organisation for allowing this backstage access to their favourite team and players.

4.4.3   Esteem

Praise and insults directed towards players or coaches formed the category 'esteem' ($n = 2{,}516$). Most praise comments were posted in response to the live video post video 'Celebrate in true Queensland Style'. Queensland Maroon fans were able to congratulate the Queensland

Maroons for their 2017 State of Origin series win and comments were often full of emotion and excitement. Facebook Live video posts allowed fans to have an insider view in the dressing room post series win. Therefore, rather than being cut off after a live television broadcast, fans had the opportunity to have a sense of having their voice heard and personally congratulate the Queensland Maroons team and individual players for their success in real time. This live video was immersive as the energy and excitement of the victory came through in the live video which encouraged fans to interact with similar energy and excitement

> *'What a fantastic game!!! I feel so honoured to have been there to be a part of it all!! JT you're a legend!!! The whole team are legends!!!! Feels great to be a QUEENSLANDER!!!* and *WHOOP MAROONS... Awesome Game Guys!!! SUPER WELL DONE!!! ORIGIN IS HERE* [TO] *STAY'*

Facebook Live may provide a direct communication line (albeit at times one-sided) for fans to connect with their team providing a sense of interactivity. Although the Queensland Maroons are not responding to fans, Facebook Live is being used for fans to talk directly to the team, as if they were conversing in real life. Although it is one-way interaction, the experience of being 'inside' the dressing room and a shared experience by the viewers of the live video post and those in the video still appeared to provide a sense of interaction.

> *'True Legends is an understatement. Wonderful effort guys. Cameron Smith you are a wonderful captain. Including JT in lifting the Shield high, Congratulations to all players, coaches and support staff for a mighty effort, All Queenslanders go to bed very happy tonight knowing you played your hearts out and won. What a wonderful*

record you have for QLD. It was a beautiful moment when you included all your

children in the team photo up on the steps, Enjoy your celebrations'.

Although many comments were positive through sharing praise of the Queensland Maroons, some comments were negative in sentiment and provided insults. However, insults were often aimed towards the opposition and seldom towards the Queensland Maroons or their players. This outcome may be reflective of the 2017 State of Origin season and the successful history of the Queensland Maroons with fans positive in sentiment about the teams' and athletes' performances. Fans used live video for 'blasting' – through insulting NSW, and more specifically, their fans, e.g. '*NSW SUCKS, BUNCH OF LOSERS!*' Blasting can be used as a way for fans to protect their identity following a loss where fans are deriding the opponent, and more specifically their fans (Branscombe & Wann, 1994; Cialdini & Richardson, 1980). However, these types of comments were not only used following a defeat, but also used following a win, which is demonstrative of the fierce rivalry between Queensland and NSW.

4.4.4 Passion

Passion was found to be a common response ($n = 2,234$) for fans responding to live video posts. These comments were less likely to encourage any interaction from other fans, but were used to share a fan's emotion about either the Queensland Maroons as a team or an individual, e.g. '*O IT'S GREAT TO BE A QLDER!!*' and '*So excited, I feel sick*!' These types of comments were often used to reinforce self-identity as a Queensland Maroons fan and may be used to create relationships with the sport organisation and fan, and fan to fan by linking emotions through a shared passion or emotion.

Responses illustrating passion for the team and athletes were prompted by almost all content with fans clearly using any opportunity to display their admiration for the team or an athlete, e.g. '*I LOVE YOU MAROONS!'* However, content that featured an athlete making an announcement of their retirement were most likely to receive admiration responses than any other content type. These types of comments were often brief and encouraged little interaction or elaboration, e.g. '*A true unselfish champion*' and '*Billy is the man.'* These short bursts of emotion allowed fans to express their respect and admiration and simply allowed fans to proclaim their love for the team.

However, in order to tap into the passion of fans it is necessary to accept that views expressed by fans will not always be what the sport organisation wants to hear. Fans used live video posts to express their frustration with the team and individual players. Fans were likely to express frustration during a team announcement or following a loss, e.g. '*Worst decision in Origin history.'* Although some comments displaying frustration were longer, there were some crossovers with expertise comments. Fans were often frustrated with selections and would offer their 'expert' opinion on why they believed a decision should have gone another way. The difference with frustration and expertise comments is that expertise comments may offer facts and lengthy statements, whereas frustration comments may be more due to a quick reaction to the content that is being viewed in the moment, and may not make any sense if not paired with the visual, e.g. '*WTF!?'* and '*Typical…absolutely ridiculous!'*

4.4.5   Expertise

Expertise comments ($n = 810$) were often lengthier than any other category, and often encouraged interaction with other fans either through comment reactions, or further comments in the reply to other users. Fans were willing to exhibit their knowledge of rugby

league, State of Origin and the Queensland Maroons most often during team announcements, e.g., fans used the live video posts to predict the score on an upcoming game, '*QLD by 20' or 'QLD by 13, Gagai first try and player of the series.*' Fans simply wanted to let other fans know their thoughts on who would win the game and these comments did not encourage interaction from other fans. However, prediction and analysis comments that were lengthier and provided reasoning for analysis generated discussion amongst the fan community:

> '*The forward pack needs to be both aggressive and smart. Hit hard but don't dive in and miss. It will be more difficult than many people realise. When it comes down to it I think our backline is still superior to NSW.*'

Fans were willing to share their opinions and expertise and may have had a sense of a 'direct line' through the live experience with other fans. These types of comments may have been used on another post type, however the concept of a live video encouraged interaction as it provided a community of people who were viewing the same content. Their similar interactions formed a fan community of discussion with predictions about the upcoming games.

Queensland Maroons fans used live video posts to display their knowledge about the team and verified themselves as a 'fan' with lengthy comments analysing the team as they were announced in 'real-time' by QRL, e.g.

> '*Hunt is a better defender than DCE. Munster or Morgan 5/8 but Munster can fill the fullback roll if Billy is injured. The Melbourne Munster/Cronk Combo would be great but think he will be in the Centres. Morgan and Hunt can cover numerous roles. The*

edge over DCE. Hunt was probably the best player for the Bronc's the other night...

Bring on Origin 3 QUEENSLANDER!'

These types of comments were often 'liked' by other fans to show a mutual agreement of the statement, or followed up with a comment to argue or verify points within the statement, e.g. *'Sorry as I've stated stats are all in Slater's favour if you can prove otherwise I'll admit that I'm wrong and Darius should be in front of Slater.'* Some fans referred to these type of comments as 'armchair coaches' and encouraged other fans to leave the coaching aspect of the game to the team, e.g. '*Lots of armchair coaches and players in the comments section.*' However, these types of comments generated by live posts are an important aspect of engagement as they encourage 'meaningful engagement' and create back and forth interaction between fans. Fans want to share their 'expert' opinion and the discussion that arises from other replies may encourage organic reach of the live video posts.

4.4.6 Help

In comparison to other types of fan responses, live video posts were seldom used for Queensland Maroons fans to seek knowledge or provide knowledge. By seeking knowledge through the live videos, fans were able to have an opportunity to connect socially with other fans with common interests, and often received information in 'real time' through comment replies. These types of comments were posted to the community asking for help rather than interacting directly with the broadcaster. In comparison to broadcaster interaction, general questions were posed to the community rather than directed to the broadcaster to answer. QRL did not reply to any of these questions, however other fans replied through comments and provided answers for fans, creating a sense of community. Fans often asked for help with game-related information that only fans may know, e.g. *'Does anyone know when the Maroons*

have any open training sessions?', and also questions that may have been found through an internet search, e.g. '*What time does the game start?'* These type of comments often started with the opening words *'Does anyone know…'*'or *'Anyone know…',* showing that the fan is seeking the fan community's answer to a specific question in relation to the Queensland Maroons, e.g. *'Anyone know what time the boys are training at Sanctuary Cove tomorrow?'* Through replying to these comments, fans may have increased their self-identity by portraying themselves as experts with knowledge about the team.

Furthermore, due to the live nature of live-video posts, fans who tune in while the live video post is still being broadcast may miss out on crucial information. For example, during a press conference where a team announcement is made, a fan who enters the live video post halfway through the broadcast may miss the team announcement and therefore seeks the information from other fans, e.g. '*Can someone please tell me the team*?' and '*Has the team been announced*?' This may be a challenge for live video posts as fans are viewing these types of posts for specific content and if the information is missed, the video may no longer be engaging. Therefore it is crucial that sport organisations consider the content being provided in a live video post and also consider the characteristics that make a post engaging (such as unpredictability) as otherwise they may be factors that cause fan disengagement.

4.5   FACEBOOK LIVE MANAGERIAL PERSPECTIVES

This section reveals the results of the qualitative interview examining QRL's perspective of utilising Facebook Live on the Queensland Maroon's Facebook page throughout the 2017 State of Origin season. To gain an overall and broad understanding of the managerial implications behind live streaming, a qualitative interview was undertaken with the Digital Manager responsible for overseeing QRL SM.

4.5.1   Content Relevancy

QRL initially began using Facebook's 'Live' feature in 2016; the same year that Facebook rolled out their new feature to all Facebook users. Although little was known about the managerial implications of Facebook Live in the early stages of use, QRL believed Facebook Live had the potential to extend their Facebook reach. The SM manager referred to Facebook Live as a '*new toy that we were excited to try out to boost our reach*'. The use of the word 'toy' by QRL indicates the early stages of Facebook Live, as if it was something to 'play with' and trial rather than seriously implement into their SM strategy.

The Queensland Maroons' broad strategic SM plan for Facebook is focused on a) engaging fans by providing content surrounding the Queensland Maroons team throughout the year and b) directing fans back to their website. Posts on the Queensland Maroons' Facebook page predominantly feature some text and a link to encourage fans to click through to the QRL website for further information. However, in contrast to this, the SM manager stated that Facebook Live posts are focused in the moment and are not created for the purpose of generating website traffic. Therefore, these types of post descriptions generally do not feature a link or a pinned comment that directs traffic to the QRL website. Facebook Live is used by

QRL as they believe it could open the door to their supporters by providing fans with a different level of access to the team and provide an opportunity to extend the fan experience.

Since the inclusion of Facebook Live on the Queensland Maroons Facebook page in 2016, the QRL SM manager does not believe the feature has changed QRL's overall strategic SM plan dramatically, but rather has just provided another tool to use to engage fans. That said, the QRL SM manager believes that Facebook Live posts potentially have a higher level of reach and engagement than other types of posts, however they do not generally focus on creating Facebook Live content. Although other types of posts were planned (such as native video highlight reels that take effort editing and juxtaposing content or specifically timed content surrounding an athlete's milestone), the SM manager indicated that Facebook Live posts were generally 'in the moment', and went 'live' when the organisation deemed this is something that the fans may be interested in. For example, the live video 'in the sheds post' of the 2017 series win was not planned but was deemed an opportunity to extend the fan experience. The organisation's SM strategy appears to be content-focused as a priority, choosing a post type that best fits the content to tell their unique brand story to maximise engagement.

4.5.2 Resourcing

Facebook promotes the ease of access of Live by suggesting users 'broadcast to the largest audience in the world with the camera in your pocket' (Facebook, 2017). However, the QRL SM manager did not agree with this statement for two reasons: he believed that native videos showing a Queensland Maroons player's highlights reached a higher level of audience than any other type of post, and that Facebook Live was not as simple as using the camera in their pocket. The Queensland Maroons SM team use a Diji Osmo which is:

A hand-held camera that sits your phone off to the side of the phone's display and using the Diji app to use Facebook API to push live. Stops shaking and allows to shoot professional looking video… Better picture quality than a phone and allows for an extended microphone for better sound.

In contrast to Facebook suggesting that it is easy to go live with a mobile phone, to effectively do so and be professional, organisations are increasingly being expected to use external cameras, microphones and software to produce a professional live video package. This equipment is potentially a barrier and challenge for some organisations that are unable to invest in these resources, or in professionals who can provide this service. Furthermore, the use of external equipment takes away the 'spur of the moment liveness' that QRL indicated they implemented when using Facebook Live as it takes effort to set up the equipment rather than going 'live' in the moment. The use of such resources or production elements may also work against the notion of the purported 'live' product by appearing to be constructed or 'produced', consequently taking away a sense of authenticity.

Although the resourcing of live streaming may be a barrier for some organisations, QRL included Facebook Live again throughout the 2018 State of Origin series (see Chapter Five). The SM manager indicated that Facebook Live would be included in the SM strategy, with a focus on investing in higher production live streams, such as a live interactive show from training camps in the lead up to State of Origin (which the QRL did not produce in either 2018 or 2019 and is further discussed in the 2018 results section). This focus suggests that QRL are wanting to invest in Live video by providing a unique and exclusive experience for fans and giving them a direct connection to the team which requires a high level of resources and planning to provide this service. However, although QRL are willing to invest in

resources to provide a high production live stream for fans, the SM manager stated that when it comes to planning content they '*try to think of live stream video first rather than native video - but it's purely resourcing* (as a barrier to producing live stream content).' Whilst native video requires resourcing in the form of editing, post-production, etc., it may be suggested that the resources required for live streaming may be a barrier due to the concept of 'live' being 'in the moment', which does not allow for a complexity of setups when there is a moment to be shared with fans. In comparison, native video may require a high level of resources, however there is a wider time frame to account for these resources to be implemented at a high standard.

4.5.3   Enhanced Reach and Engagement

The QRL SM manager believes that in the case of the Queensland Maroons', a successful post was based on a combination of organic reach and Facebook's engagement rate. According to them, a successful post (related to any type of post: photo, link, live video or video) on game day should reach over four million people [it was not mentioned how this figure was derived], and be focused on allowing the fan to celebrate alongside the Queensland Maroons. Although celebration was mentioned as a measure of success, their SM manager stated that they do not want to use the Queensland Maroons season, or outcomes of games as a post metric to measure success.

The SM manager believes that no matter the result, there should be an opportunity for fans to feel connected to their team. Furthermore, QRL put focus on understanding how they can maximise engagement with a year-round schedule, such as content on game day in comparison to December or January when they are no deemed no longer relevant. It is the organisation's intention that all Facebook posts are reaching and engaging the Queensland

Maroons fans and allowing them to feel connected to their team, no matter the time of year. As the State of Origin season is generally from mid-May to early July, QRL develop year-long content schedules by using *'social media to think of the athlete as a Queensland Maroon player first, and a club player second, which helps to develop successful content that is relevant all year long.'* These type of comments by the SM manager suggest that the SM strategy appears to be athlete-driven in its focus rather than organisational. By using an athlete-driven SM strategy, QRL are able to provide an authentic relationship with a range of people who display passion and pride for the athletes who represent their favourite team. Furthermore, QRL are able to use Facebook by using an athlete-driven focus to give the Queensland Maroons a voice and create a connection with fans.

During the 2017 State of Origin season, the 'In Sheds Post Celebration' live video and 'Johnathan Thurston Highlights' video were identified by the SM manager as highly successful posts during the research period as they *'went crazy in terms of engagement and reach.'* Although they were able to identify these posts, he indicated that it's difficult to define what is specifically engaging for their fans but noted that it appears to be more about the specific content. This response indicates that SM managers need to be mindful of the content and understand the post type required to successfully leverage maximum reach and engagement. The SM manager believes that:

> *'Fans are less engaged with press conferences, someone in front of a media backdrop and all media asking questions for five minutes is boring for a fan* [however in comparison] *the team celebration video was huge in terms of engagement - the highest type of engaging live video.'*

This example suggests the type of live video content is important in capturing audience attention and thus, SM managers should be selective in video use. After failing to engage fans in 2017, they believed that due to a lack of exclusivity they would not include press conferences through live streams in the future, as fans can find this information instantly from other media providers. Instead, Facebook Live should be focused on extending the fan experience and offering a unique and exclusive experience for fans which may prove to engage fans further than content they can receive from other sources.

Furthermore, the SM manager believes the timing of live streams affects the reach and engagement in comparison to other post types. While other Facebook posts (such as photos, videos, links and statues) can be scheduled to amplify maximum reach and engagement based on optimum SM audience usage, Facebook Live cannot be scheduled and is therefore posted in the moment. Although Facebook Live may be planned, most Facebook Live content occurs in the moment and timing may not be optimal for peak fan audience. Although live posts are posted to Facebook as a video post after the live stream, live streams should give viewers a sense of immediacy by allowing viewers to see what is happening in real time to create an engaging viewing experience. The sense of immediacy in relation to live streams is consistent with the SM manager's suggestion that engagement is focused on the moment the video is live, and engagement once the video becomes a recorded video post is an afterthought.

4.5.4   Fan Responses – Encouraging Interaction

The SM manager suggested they focus on creating and maintaining relationships with fans by creating brand stories that engage fans, thus using Facebook Live as a RM tool rather than utilising the tool to sell products (tickets, memberships, merchandise). However, although QRL view Facebook Live as a RM tool, they are not responding or engaging with fan's

comments and therefore it may be viewed as a one-sided relationship. Through developing brand stories that are focused on creating and maintaining fans, QRL believe they are able to gain deeper understanding of Queensland Maroons fans that appeals to a broader fan-base, stretching beyond the 'core' fans. The SM manager stated QRL monitor fan responses to understand what content is appealing to fans by gaining knowledge through SM metrics and reading fan comments to tailor their future content based on this feedback.

The responses of fans are important to the Queensland Maroons SM strategy, as the SM manager believes engagement success can be monitored by their fans telling them they have done a great job. While most comments generally relate to the nature of the content, there are numerous comments that are left by fans letting the organisation know they enjoy the content posted by QRL and they would like to see more of these types of posts (for example, highlight videos of previous years – requesting another year or moment to be featured, or player interviews with another athlete). Furthermore, the SM manager stated that being told by fans that they had done a 'good job' was in relation to the engagement of fans on each post (number of comments, number of shares). Although fans are engaging with Queensland Maroon's Facebook posts by leaving comments directly communicating with the Queensland Maroons (organisation, athletes, coaches), the SM manager mentioned QRL doesn't generally reply to any comments. There is a large quantity of comments left on each post which makes it difficult to reply to everyone, and the SM manager believes that if they reply to one fan, other fans may feel isolated and this may be detrimental for fan-to-brand relationships.

One of the issues raised by the SM manager's comments is how to understand fan comments on Facebook and whether they give an accurate picture of fan experiences and attitudes. A

need for a qualitative analysis of fan comments on Facebook is suggested by Wallace, Wilson, and Miloch (2011) to provide a richer understanding of fan behaviour. As the SM manager stated, there are a variety of different Queensland Maroon fans, such as '*the fan who is more engaged with State of Origin - in a team announcement, offering their opinion and slightly more advanced than a casual fan who just wants Queensland to win.*' However, the researcher identified that the SM manager's comments are not substantiated by empirical evidence and require further investigation to better understand how Queensland Maroons fans are responding to Facebook Live. Furthermore, by understanding how fans are responding to Facebook Live, SM managers may be able to tailor content based on how fans are influenced to engage with specific content.

4.6 ENHANCING FAN ENGAGEMENT

Through triangulating data from the reach, engagement, fan responses and managerial implication sections, data may be analysed utilising the Queensland Maroons' audience information and user insights to gain a deeper understanding of live video consumption habits and build a broader content strategy designed to enhance fan engagement. QRL have implemented live video posts within their content strategy since the tool was introduced in 2016, however it is imperative to leverage live streaming to manage relationships with fans and to maximise benefits for the sport organisation. It has been identified throughout this chapter that live video has the potential to be engaging, however the type of content utilised by the Queensland Maroons may impact fan engagement. Through gaining an understanding of live video post content types, sport organisations can leverage SM to enhance the fan experience which may lead to enhanced fan engagement and a better relationship between fans and teams.

Sport organisations may influence how fans are engaging with live video posts by implementing specific content that factors fan responses and levels of reach and engagement to provide an exciting fan experience. QRL used behind-the-scenes views, events and press conferences throughout the 2017 State of Origin season. However, when analysing how fans are engaging with these post types it may be proposed that offering content through a different form of live video content type may encourage further fan engagement. This research proposes that there are seven types of content that can be used in a live video: behind-the-scenes view, questions and answers, breaking news, live shows, events, interviews, and press conferences. The remaining section explains these types of live video posts in relation to the Queensland Maroons' 2017 season.

4.6.1   Behind the Scenes

Metaphorically speaking, QRL used live video posts to open the door to fans and allow access behind the scenes to areas that were not previously accessible to fans. These types of posts received the highest level of overall engagement (measured by engaged users) and proved to be the most engaging type of live video post for Queensland Maroons fans. These types of live video posts included providing access to the changing rooms post series win, team bus arrivals and the team kicking a football in a park prior to an upcoming game. This content encouraged fans to respond with passion and support comments, which may have been influenced due to the timing of the posts from QRL (prior and post games). QRL indicated that these types of posts were often not planned but rather used when there was an 'opportunity' to go live that QRL deemed engaging for fans.

4.6.2   Questions and Answers

QRL did not use Questions and Answers videos during the 2017 State of Origin season and indicated that they do not answer fans' questions on live video posts as they feel they may alienate fans by picking and choosing questions to answer, leaving some fans feeling left out if their questions are not answered by the Queensland Maroons. However, Haimson and Tang (2017) indicate that:

'Interactions on live streams include text comments and questions, to which broadcasters and other viewers often respond…when other viewers responded to comments or questions made on a live stream, participants were significantly more likely to want to experience a future event via live stream. Interactivity is a key difference between event content that is broadcast live in real time, and content that is made available afterwards' (p.55).

Therefore, it may be suggested that QRL encourage engagement by utilising a specific Question and Answer live video post to provide fans with an opportunity to have their questions answered by the Queensland Maroons. While other post types, such as Press Conferences, indicated that fans are motivated to comment with expertise-related comments, it may indicate that fan engagement would be enhanced through the opportunity to engage with the team directly in real time. Furthermore, results suggest that comments on live video posts are higher than other post types and therefore if fans had an opportunity to have their question selected by the Queensland Maroons to answer, it may result in a higher volume of comments on these types of posts (potentially increasing overall engagement and organic reach).

The Queensland Maroons indicated that access to athletes was an issue for live video posts, however content posted throughout the 2017 series such as players and coaching staff addressing media in the lead up to games may have received higher levels of fan engagement if they provided fans with the opportunity to ask questions through the live video functionality rather than just showcasing questions from media.

4.6.3 Breaking News

QRL did not utilise any breaking news content as all news was used in the format of press conferences. QRL indicated that press conferences were not engaging for fans as information was not exclusive and could be found elsewhere. Therefore, it may be proposed that QRL utilise 'breaking news' content to share exclusive news such as team announcements, player injury updates with their fans. This type of content would be exclusive to QRL and may be engaging due to the fact that fans who interact with the Queensland Maroons would hear information directly from the organisation. This type of content encourages engagement as it would be utilised by fans and media outlets as a source of information.

4.6.4 Live Shows

While this type of content was not provided in 2017, QRL indicated that they would like to include a 'live show' from camp within their live video SM strategy. It may be suggested that using live video to host a show may encourage opportunities for fans to interact with the team and influence the broadcast. The aspect of 'live' would allow fans to ask questions and gain insights into the lead up to a State of Origin match and provide fans with an exclusive experience only available through the live video post. QRL indicated that athlete access is a barrier for this type of content, however if QRL included this within their SSM plan there may be an opportunity to plan adequate resources to deliver this unique fan experience.

4.6.5 Events

QRL utilised a live video post to showcase the Mackay Fan Day. This type of post was deemed lower in overall engagement in comparison to Privilege View content, but higher than Press Conferences. It provided fans with a special viewpoint of the team meeting and greeting fans in Mackay and provided remote viewers an immersive experience, as one comment noted '*Exciting hearing kids yelling out players' by name. Qlder*!!' Fans were also able to interact during the event and react to content, e.g. *'Wow, police car nearly ran over Morgo',* which encouraged other fans to respond with further interaction on this type of post.

4.6.6 Interviews

QRL did not use this type of content as all interviews took place within press conferences. However, it may be suggested that players and staff be interviewed by QRL to provide fans with exclusive content rather than answering questions from the media. It was indicated that press conferences received lower engagement than other types of posts, therefore, through utilising an interview post, QRL may have been able to showcase the team's personality and human traits of the organisation rather than orchestrated by external media. Engaging content across all post types was often content that reflected player or team highlights showcasing success, therefore live video posts may include interviews with past or present players reacting to this content and questions about the viewed content to help relive these moments.

4.6.7 Press Conferences

The most common type of live video post used by QRL was to stream press conferences. QRL indicated that these types of live video posts are not engaging for fans and would not be including them in future SM plans. These types of posts feature Queensland Maroons athletes and coaches answering questions from media and do not encourage fan interaction. Fans use

these types of post to react to content as it happens through expertise and prediction, however there are often long moments of downtime and important information from the press conferences can be found elsewhere as information is not exclusive to QRL.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter began by presenting the 2017 findings of the SM insight tools in relation to reach and engagement. Findings from this analysis indicated that live video posts do not have a higher level of reach and engagement than other post types, however they do generate more comments than other post types. Reach and engagement was influenced by the content of the posts, and behind the scenes content was perceived to be the most engaging for fans. Fans used comments to respond to these posts to send messages of support and encouragement to the team in real time. However, QRL identified that they do not respond to fans through live video posts because it is not practical to respond to all and they don't want to privilege some fans over others by replying to only selected posts. QRL also identified that they do not consider live video posts as part of the strategic social media plan, but rather use live video when they believe there is a moment that fans may want to see. Finally, QRL believed they would no longer use live video for the purpose of press conferences as they deemed this as not engaging for fans.

CHAPTER FIVE

2018 RESULTS

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

This chapter explores the use of Facebook Live by QRL on their Queensland Maroons

Facebook page across the 2018 State of Origin season. Like the previous chapter, it begins by

providing an overview of the Queensland Maroons 2018 season and indicates important

aspects that influenced the season such as results, player milestones, retirements and

debutants. Following this overview, a summary of how QRL implemented Facebook Live

within their SM plan throughout the 2018 season is provided and highlights the videos used

throughout the collection period to provide context for the study. The remaining sections

present results of the study in terms of reach, engagement, fan responses, management

implications and fan engagement in relation to the 2018 season.

5.1   THE 2018 QUEENSLAND MAROONS SEASON

The 2018 State of Origin season was the 37th annual best of three rugby league series

contested between NSW and Queensland. Prior to the 2018 season, Queensland were the

current title holders, winning eleven out of the past twelve series. Kevin Walters coached

Queensland for the third season in a row, and Brad Fittler replaced Laurie Daley as the NSW

coach. Game one was held on Wednesday June 6th, 2018 at the Melbourne Cricket Ground,

Melbourne. In the lead up to the game, the Queensland Maroons had lost Jonathan Thurston,

Cameron Smith and Cooper Cronk to retirement, and Billy Slater to injury, and the media

suggested the series was the best chance for NSW to end 'over a decade of State of Origin

misery' (*The Roar*, 2018). Prior to the State of Origin season, Billy Slater utilised the

Queensland Maroons Facebook page to go 'live' to announce his retirement from State of

Origin football at the end of the 2018 season. Following this announcement, he once again took to Facebook Live to let fans know that he would be unavailable for Game 1 due to injury but was hopeful to be back for Games 2 and 3. Media attention leading up to this game was often referenced as a 'changing of the guard' (Kennedy, 2018) due to the inexperienced emerging Queensland State of Origin side. However, the NSW Blues were also inexperienced with 11 new debutants in the team for Game 1, 2018 (Otto, 2018a).

The Queensland Maroons used Facebook Live for media conferences regarding the announcement of team selections, however unlike the 2017 series, Facebook Live was not utilised to provide access for training sessions, on the team bus, or player interviews. NSW defeated Queensland 22 – 12 in front of 87,122 fans to take a 1-0 lead in the 2018 State of Origin series. Otto (2018a) stated that although the Blues were the better team, commentators and fans on social media blamed referee decisions for the result and suggested that the game's result would have been different if it had not been for 'crucial' referee decisions. Game 2 took place as a 'stand-alone' game on Sunday 24th June 2018, which was different to the typical 'in-round' Wednesday evening fixture. State of Origin had not been played on a Sunday evening since 2001. In a preview for the 2018 NRL Season, it was reported that the schedule change would 'ease the strain on NRL clubs losing players to Origin duties significantly and will almost certainly be a ratings bonanza for Channel Nine' (Tyeson, 2017). While in the past State of Origin fans would have had to battle Sydney traffic and board public transport with workday commuters to attend a mid-week match at ANZ Stadium, Sydney, the Sunday fixture proved successful with a sell-out crowd of 82,223 spectators (Schipp, 2018). However, Channel 9 expressed concern about the change in fixture and reported a dip in television viewing ratings with 2.09 million viewers in metro areas compared to 2.38 million viewers for Game 2, 2017 (Pengilly, 2018).

In a similar situation to 2017, the NSW Blues lead the series 1-0 with a second game win to be played at home to win the series. In the lead up to Game 2, Billy Slater used Facebook Live to let fans know he would be returning to play in his final State of Origin series, giving the Queensland Maroons an incentive to win and take the series decider back home to Suncorp Stadium for Game 3. Once again, the Queensland Maroons used Facebook Live for media conferences regarding the announcement of team selections and did not provide any back-stage access leading up to the game.

Otto (2018b) stated 'NSW has smashed Queensland's dynasty of dominance to roar to their second series victory since 2005 in a famous result at ANZ Stadium' (para 1). The NSW Blues held off a strong defensive effort by the Queensland Maroons to secure an 18-14 State of Origin game 2 win and secure the 2018 State of Origin series. The series win became the NSW second series win in 13 years, leading the media to suggest that the Queensland dynasty had finally come to an end (Otto, 2018b).

Game 3 was held on Wednesday 11th July 2018 at Suncorp Stadium, Brisbane. In the lead up to the game, media suggested that the series was over when Cameron Smith, Jonathan Thurston and Cooper Cronk announced their representative football retirement at the conclusion of the 2017 season which may have undermined the success of the NSW Blues series victory (Walter, 2018). As the series was over at the final whistle of Game 2, Queensland were not only playing for pride to prevent a humiliating whitewash, but they were also focused on 'saying goodbye' to Billy Slater who was playing his final State of Origin game for Queensland. As Greg Inglis was ruled out with injury, Billy Slater was given captaincy for his final match on home soil. The Queensland Maroons won Game 3 18-12 avoiding a whitewash, a feat that has not been completed by the NSW Blues since the 2000

State of Origin series. The win and retirement of Billy Slater was overshadowed by controversy, as following the match Billy Slater was awarded the Wally Lewis Medal for being the best player throughout the series although he had not played in Game 1, and Queensland had lost the series. Otto (2018c) stated that 'the true shame of the bizarre decision is that it has smeared a rugby league champion in his moment of farewell and taken the public focus off of his Game 3 heroics and onto his failure to stop NSW from taking an unbeatable 2-0 series lead' (para 3).

5.1.1 The 2018 Queensland Maroons Facebook Overview

The data mining process began by breaking down the type of Facebook posts that were posted during the period May 27th – July 13th, 2018 on the Queensland Maroons Facebook page. Facebook posts ($n = 258$), included four different types of posts to analyse: video ($n = 38$), live video ($n = 14$), photos ($n = 22$) and links ($n = 183$). The Queensland Maroons did not make any status/text posts during this period. The Queensland Maroons posted a total of 14 Facebook Live video posts during the period. Table 5.1 provides details about what each of these videos contained to assist with further discussion in the following results section.

Table 5.1   *Facebook Live content posted by the Maroons (27/05/2018 – 13/07/2018)*

Date	Time (AEST)	Content Title	Content Description	Length of Video (Min:Sec)	Content Type
28th May 2018	0955	OFFICIAL | QLD Maroons team announcement.	Press conference featuring Queensland Maroons coaching staff announcing the Queensland Maroons team ahead of Game 1, 2018.	23:14	Press Conference
29th May 2018	1045	Billy Slater with an announcement about his Origin career. #QLDER	Queensland Maroons athlete Billy Slater makes a statement to media regarding the State of Origin 2018 season being his final season.	13:43	Press Conference
31st May 2018	1218	Queensland Maroons players Josh Papalii and Valentine Holmes speak to the media, LIVE from Camp Maroon.	Press conference featuring Queensland Maroons athletes Josh Papalii and Valentine Holmes answering media questions ahead of State of Origin Game 1, 2018	16:00	Press Conference
31st May 2018	1903	LIVE: QLD State of Origin forward Jarrod Wallace talks to the media from #CampMaroon	Press conference featuring Queensland Maroons athlete Jarrod Wallace answering media questions.	8:01	Press Conference
3rd June 2018	1158	Maroons playmakers Ben Hunt and Michael Morgan speak to the media after Sunday training on the Gold Coast.	Press conference featuring Queensland Maroons athletes Ben Hunt and Michael Morgan answering media questions.	13:29	Press Conference
4th June 2018	1719	Billy Slater speaks to the media at Melbourne Airport.	Queensland Maroons athlete Billy Slater answers media questions at Melbourne airport regarding his availability to be selected for State of Origin Game 1, 2018.	5:42	Press Conference
5th June 2018	1258	Queensland coach Kevin Walters speaks to the media on the eve of Game I of the Holden State of Origin series.	Press conference featuring Queensland Maroons coach Kevin Walters answering media questions ahead of Game 1, 2018.	7:10	Press Conference
6th June 2018*	1051	The final word – Queensland Maroons assistant coach Josh Hannay.	Press conference featuring Queensland Maroons assistant coach Josh Hannay answering media questions.	7:10	Press Conference
19th June 2018	1207	Kalyn Ponga speaks to the media ahead of Sunday's Origin II showdown.	Press conference featuring Queensland Maroons athlete Kalyn Ponga answering media questions ahead of State of Origin, Game 2, 2018.	9:57	Press Conference

21st June 2018	1553	Queensland Women's State of Origin coach Jason Hetherington addresses the media ahead of Friday night's game at North Sydney Oval.	A media interview with the Queensland Women's State of Origin coach addressing the growth of women playing Rugby League in Australia.	5:18	Press Conference
23rd June 2018	1013	Kevin Walters delivers his game day eve Origin conference.	Press conference featuring coach Kevin Walters addressing the media ahead of State of Origin, Game 2, 2018.	7:23	Press Conference
2nd July 2018	0959	Coach Kevin Walters faces the media following the announcement of the team for Game III of the Holden State of Origin series.	Press conference featuring coach Kevin Walters answering media questions after announcing the team for State of Origin Game 3, 2018.	17:23	Press Conference
9th July 2018	1647	Coach Kevin Walters addresses the media ahead of the 2018 Holden State of Origin finale, held Wednesday night at Suncorp Stadium.	Press conference featuring coach Kevin Walters answering media questions ahead of State of Origin Game 3, 2018.	14:34	Press Conference
11th July 2018*	1017	Maroons assistant coach Josh Hannay faces the media on the day of Game III of the Holden State of Origin series at Suncorp Stadium.	Press conference featuring Queensland Maroons assistant coach Josh Hannay answering media questions.	5:56	Press Conference

Note: * denotes a Facebook post that was posted on game day by the Queensland Maroons Facebook page

5.2   REACH

Table 5.2 shows that Facebook photo posts have the highest organic reach ($n = 232,359$).

However, video posts ($n = 113,570$) have a higher level of reach for Queensland Maroon

Facebook fans than any other type of Facebook post. Live video posts have the lowest level

of reach for both organic reach ($n = 93,230$) and Queensland Maroon Facebook fans ($n = 80,855$).

Table 5.2   *Lifetime Organic and Fan Reach per Post type (27/05/2018 – 13/07/2018)*

Type of Post	Minimum	Maximum	Average	Rank
Organic Reach				
Video	3,131	1,412,936	180,004	2
Live Videos	46,173	157,163	93,230	4
Photos	6,830	949,633	232,359	1
Links	3,131	317,928	96,760	3
Fan Reach				
Video	3,117	3,522,326	113,570	1
Live Videos	43,218	136,121	80,855	4
Photos	5,668	238,989	107,073	2
Links	17,672	213,711	89,896	3

5.2.1   Content Relevancy

Table 5.3 suggests that the type of content posted appears to influence the total reach of a

post. Even though the 2018 season was not successful on the field, content that aided the fan

to 'relive the glory days' or celebrate incoming or outgoing players (such as native video

highlight compilations or interviews) had the highest level of organic reach. Most of these

posts were video posts ($n = 6$), and there were no Facebook Live video posts that featured in

the overall top ten posts throughout the research period. It is notable that the 'Great

Queensland Maroons State of Origin Moments' video posts reached 1,412,936 Facebook

users. This finding is nearly double the network size of the Queensland Maroons and may indicate that users are interested in experiencing nostalgic feelings by viewing highlight packages of the Queensland Maroons history – particularly in times when the team's on-field success is not there. It may also suggest that even for long-established brands, there are a significant number of 'soft' supporters who may disengage if they are not successful. The overall reach was noticeably lower in 2018 in comparison to 2017 which may suggest that fans are more willing to be part of a successful team's social media campaign rather than an unsuccessful team.

Table 5.3 *Top Ten Overall Posts by Lifetime Total Reach (27/05/2018 – 13/07/2018)*

	Type of Post	Date	Title	Content Description	Total Reach
1	Video	27th May 2018	Great Queensland Maroons State of Origin moments ⬜ #QLDER	A video highlights package of great Queensland Maroons players, plays, and games over the Queensland Maroons history.	1,412,936
2	Video	10th July 2018	Greatest Fullback EVER ⬜ We think so ⬜ #QLDER	A video highlights package of Queensland Maroons athlete Billy Slater playing various games over his career at the Queensland Maroons.	651,145
3	Video	9th July 2018	Hear from Billy Slater's family, his teammates and peers. The definitive tribute to one of QLD's greatest ever servants.	A video tribute to retiring Queensland Maroon player Billy Slater. The video features snippets of praise from Billy's family and team mates and is juxtaposed with highlights from his Queensland Maroons playing career.	607,215
4	Photo	5th June 2018	Go the Maroons ⬜ #QLDER	A photo post encouraging Facebook users to update their profile picture with the official Queensland Maroons frame	598,406
5	Video	12th July 2018	When we win - we win together. ✊	A video inside the changing rooms of the Queensland Maroons after winning State of Origin Game 3. The video features a speech delivered to the players by Kevin Walters, and a jersey presented to retiring athlete Billy Slater. The video finishes with the team singing the victory song.	480,111
6	Video	17th June 2018	The Evolution of a Champion - Greg Inglis! 13th QLD Maroons Captain & 3rd	A video highlights package featuring Queensland Maroons athlete Greg Inglis playing throughout his	415,692

			Indigenous QLD Maroons Captain. #QLDER	Queensland Maroons career.	
7	Video	24th June 2018*	Despite the result, we can be excited by Kalyn Ponga's impressive debut in the Maroon jersey. 🌐	A video featuring a member of QRL staff interviewing Queensland Maroon athlete Kayln Ponga in the sheds after his debut for the Queensland Maroons.	388,726
8	Photo	24th June 2018*	This series won't be ours. We head back to Queensland to defend our turf! ☹ Full credit to NSW Blues. 🌐	A photo showing the Queensland Maroons team looking defeated after State of Origin Game 2, 2018 resulting in NSW winning the series. The photo has a full-time score overlay.	385,658
9	Link	27th June 2018	Your official Queensland State of Origin team from 1 to 17 - including the new captain. #QLDER	A link to QRL website linking to an article regarding the announcement of the Queensland State of Origin team including a new captain announcement.	317,928
10	Photo	11th July 2018*	A fitting farewell for an outstanding Queensland servant. #Origin #QLDER Match Report: http://bit.ly/2NLBYae	A photo showing the Queensland Maroons hugging after winning State of Origin Game 3. The photo has a fulltime score overlay.	313,476

Note: * denotes a Facebook post that was posted on game day by the Queensland Maroons Facebook page

5.3   ENGAGEMENT

5.3.1   Reactions

Table 5.4 shows a summary of reactions (like, love, haha, wow, sad and angry) across the

Queensland Maroons Facebook page per type of post during the period. Photo posts

encouraged the highest average reactions ($n = 3,510$), followed by videos ($n = 1,510$). In

comparison, Facebook Live video posts on average received fewer reactions ($n = 791$) than

any other post type.

Table 5.4   *Lifetime Engagement per Post Type (27/05/2018 – 13/07/2018)*

Type of Post	Minimum	Maximum	Average	Rank
Reactions				
Video	3	12,937	1,510	2
Live Videos	188	1,658	791	4
Photos	490	18,249	3,510	1
Links	62	7,851	1,044	3
Shares				
Video	0	7,789	425	2
Live Videos	11	249	70	3
Photos	4	4,257	510	1
Links	0	531	45	4
Comments				
Video	0	3,969	226	3
Live Videos	168	1,293	508	1
Photos	14	3,185	374	2
Links	1	1546	134	4

5.3.2   Shares

Table 5.4 provides an overview of the types of posts and the average number of shares across the research period. Photo posts ($n = 510$) were the type of posts that were shared by Facebook users more than other types of posts. In comparison, live video posts on average were only shared 70 times. Links was the only type of post to be shared less than live videos.

5.3.3   Comments

Although Facebook users were reacting and sharing Facebook Live posts less than other types of post (Table 5.4), live video posts encouraged a higher frequency of comments. On average, Facebook Live video posts received more comments than any other type of Facebook post ($n = 508$), and the minimum number of comments received was 168 which may be higher than any other type of post.

5.3.4   Engagement Rate

The User Lifetime Engagement Rate per post type across the period suggests that video posts ($n = 12\%$) generated the highest level of engagement amongst users of the Queensland Maroons Facebook page. In comparison, live video posts engaged a smaller percentage of audience ($n = 9\%$). However, when comparing all types of posts including links ($n=10\%$) and photos ($n=5\%$), there was minimal difference in engagement percentage across all content types. These results were similar for the Fan Lifetime Engagement Rate per post type, with video and live video posts ($n=9\ \%$) generating the highest level of engagement, and minimal difference across all types of posts (including photo ($n=8\%$) and links ($n=6\%$) posts). Like 2017 results, the type of content posted by the Queensland Maroons Facebook page may have influenced the engagement level of a post (Table 5.5). An engaged user is measured through a sum of total reactions, shares, comments and post clicks. Once again, no Facebook Live

video posts featured in the most engaging content across the research period in 2018. Furthermore, like reach results, most of the content across all post types were focused on providing fans opportunities to relive Queensland Maroons history or celebrate the success of the Queensland Maroons team or athletes. This finding may suggest that the total reach of a post is linked to the total engagement of a post.

Table 5.5 *Top Ten Overall Posts by Lifetime Engaged Users (27/05/2018 – 13/07/2018)*

	Type of Post	Date	Title	Content Description	Total Engagement
1	Video	27th May 2018	Great Queensland Maroons State of Origin moments 💬 #QLDER	A video highlights package of great Queensland Maroons players, plays, and games over the Queensland Maroons history.	286,974
2	Video	10th July 2018	Greatest Fullback EVER ☐ We think so 💬 #QLDER	A video highlights package of Queensland Maroons athlete Billy Slater playing various games throughout his career at the Queensland Maroons.	103,999
3	Video	17th June 2018	The Evolution of a Champion - Greg Inglis! 13th QLD Maroons Captain & 3rd Indigenous QLD Maroons Captain. #QLDER	A video highlights package featuring Queensland Maroons athlete Greg Inglis playing throughout his Queensland Maroons career.	70,326
4	Video	12th July 2018	When we win - we win together. ✊	A video inside the changing rooms of the Queensland Maroons after winning State of Origin Game 3 features a speech delivered to the players by Kevin Walters, a jersey presented to retiring athlete Billy Slater, and finishing with the team singing the victory song.	64,525
5	Video	9th July 2018	Hear from Billy Slater's family, his teammates and peers. The definitive tribute to one of QLD's greatest ever servants.	A video tribute to retiring Queensland Maroon player Billy Slater. The video features snippets of praise from Billy's family, and team mates and is juxtaposed with highlights from his Queensland Maroon's playing career.	52,228
6	Link	2nd July 2018	OFFICIAL: Billy Slater to captain Queensland team for the first time in his final Maroons appearance.	A link to an article on QRL website regarding the announcement of Billy Slater as the Queensland Maroons captain for State of Origin Game 3	49,040

7	Photo	24th June 2018*	This series won't be ours. We head back to Queensland to defend our turf! ☺ Full credit to NSW Blues. ✊	A photo showing the Queensland Maroons team looking defeated after State of Origin Game 2, 2018 resulting in NSW winning the series. The photo has a fulltime score overlay.	47,702
8	Link	27th June 2018	Your official Queensland State of Origin team from 1 to 17 - including the new captain. #QLDER	A link to QRL website linking to an article regarding the announcement of the Queensland State of Origin team including a new captain announcement.	46,755
9	Photo	5th June 2018	Go the Maroons 😈 #QLDER	A photo post encouraging Facebook user to update their profile picture with the official Queensland Maroons frame.	44,483
10	Photo	11th July 2018*	A fitting farewell for an outstanding Queensland servant. #Origin #QLDER Match Report: http://bit.ly/2NLBYae	A photo showing the Queensland Maroons hugging after winning State of Origin Game 3. The photo has a fulltime score overlay.	33,718

Note: * denotes a Facebook post that was posted on game day by the Queensland Maroons Facebook page

5.3.5 Views

Throughout the research period, on average live video posts (n = 81,255) were viewed more than video posts (n = 58,555). This finding is interesting, considering that video posts had a higher level of reach (n = 235,970) in comparison to live video (n = 178,857). Live video posts, on average, were broadcast for 11:04 minutes in duration which is longer than videos in 2017. The length of the videos may be because live videos in 2018 were focused on press conferences which are lengthier than other formats of live video and feature 'down time' which may be disengaging for some viewers. This was further emphasised by the average viewing time for live video posts (n = 3 minutes), which was shorter than the average duration of a live video post. Furthermore, the average viewing time was slightly shorter than the 2017 result, which may suggest that Queensland Maroons fans have a shorter attention span for viewing this type of content. These metrics are important for the SM manager when planning content to understand how long they are able to capture a user's attention.

5.4   FAN RESPONSES

The following section examines the comments left by Queensland Maroons fans across 14 live video posts throughout the period of May 27th – July 13th, 2018. A notable addition to the results in comparison to the 2017 fan responses was the addition of a sub-category within support identified as 'rallying'. QRL used Facebook Live for the sole purpose of press conferences throughout the 2018 State of Origin series and these types of live streams attracted a higher level of negative sentiments than other types of live posts. The reasoning behind the negative sentiments may be due to the fact press conferences were often in relation to team selections and 'armchair coaches' often wanted to share their expertise regarding an athlete's credibility within the team. Furthermore, as the team was not gaining positive results on the field, fans were showing their frustration through their responses on these live videos and often were looking for someone to blame for the results. As a result of these comments, other fans used the comments to address the collective fan group to encourage others to stop posting negative comments and encouraging fans to stay positive and support the team.

Table 5.6 provides a breakdown of all comment themes and provides a description and an example quote to understand the context of each of these themes. All exemplar quotes used in this section have been provided in verbatim.

Table 5.6   *Fans' Live Video Comments by Theme (27/05/2018 – 13/07/2018)*

Theme	Description	Illustrative Example	Number of Comments	Rank
Support			**1,802**	1
Identification	Comments related to belonging to a player or a team.	*'If you don't win the next one I'm going to cut my wrist then I will be bleeding maroon'.*	462	
Encouragement	Comments used by fans to send their support and wishes for upcoming matches.	*'All the best boys. You can and will do it for our great state. GO QUEENSLAND!!'*	1,300	
Rallying	Comments used to gather fans together and garner support for player or team.	*'People if you really believe you are true Queenslanders do what true blue Queenslanders do and give these guys a go. Get over your childish bitterness and leave DCE and Ben Hunt alone. Move on!!!'*	40	
Camaraderie			**965**	2
Fan Interaction	Comments that are focused on social interactions that are not generally related to players, coaches, teams or the sport in general. May often be used to 'tag' a friend as a form of sharing a video.	*'Get back to work Kris!!!'*	496	
Broadcaster Interaction	Comments that are used for the purpose of communicating directly with the broadcaster by either talking to the broadcaster or the team, athlete or coach on the camera.	*'I will be devastated as I haven't seen you in person until now. Dream is to see you playing in the field... I'm an avid fan of yours since I moved to Papua New Guinea for work then that's the start that I fell in love with rugby because I saw you playing in State of Origin Year 2009... now that I'm living here in Australia I'm still very emotional when MS is playing and of course always cheering and screaming your name especially when the camera focus is on you.... because of you I got hooked in a rugby sport... as an Asian particularly from Philippines I never thought I will be addicted in rugby... my days are not complete when rugby is not on.'*	469	
Esteem			**550**	5
Praise	Comments used to congratulate a team or athlete's performance. Most often used after a team's win, or to celebrate a player or coaches career milestone.	*'Best fullback there ever was or ever will be. Thanks for the top notch footy'. #billythekid*	349	

Insults	Comments that are abusive towards a player, team, or coach. These comments are often aggressive, offensive, emotional and critical.	*'DCE is a selfish player and an arrogant pig.'*	201	
Passion			**787**	3
Excitement/Joy/Frustration	Comments showing the emotional attachment to a player, coach or team; these comments could be positive or negative and often are influenced by players or team results.	*'YEAAHH THE BOIIZ!!'!*	*589*	
Admiration	Comments related to showing affection, approval and respect for a player or team.	*'Sir Billy Slater <3'*	*198*	
Expertise			**574**	4
Analysis	Comments related to fans exchanging and discussing their thoughts and opinions from their point of view towards players, coaches and the team.	*'Needed to bring new players in while the greats were still playing. They could have been taught a lot before everyone retired. But no, we waited until they all left then had to change everything around.'*	*246*	
Prediction	Comments related to fans expressing their point of view, thoughts and opinions on upcoming matches, including predictions towards players and results	*'Munster / Holmes kicker'*	*328*	
Help			130	6
Seeking Knowledge	Fans utilising comments to ask the Facebook community questions about a player, or team or general rugby league issues in general.	*'Can some1 plz name team in the comments.'*	*73*	
Providing Assistance	Fans using comments to respond to questions posed by the Facebook community regarding players, teams, or rugby league issues.	*'Sunday night game is because all the clubs don't want a split round.'*	*57*	
Unable to Code	Single letters, non-words or blank comments.		**3,319**	
Total Comments			**7,162**	

5.4.1 Support

Throughout the 2018 State of Origin season, fans used Facebook Live posts by responding with 'support' themed comments (*n*=1,801). Support based comments were focused on sending encouragement to the team or players, identifying themselves as a Queensland Maroons supporter, or for the purpose of rallying fans together to encourage other fans to support the team. QRL (2015) described their fans as "loyal, vocal and dedicated" (para. 1), and these types of comments reflected these values. The use of the war cry '*Queenslander*' was apparent in comments and was popularised by Queensland Maroons athlete Billy Moore in the 1995 State of Origin series. Although Moore was not the first to use the Queenslander war cry, he said it had been around for a decade before he used it, but it is noted he immortalised and popularised the expression. QRL (2015) states "Queenslander has long been a rallying cry for the Maroons, and it is heard at every game and is firmly interwoven with State of Origin lore" (para. 6). The term 'Queenslander' on its own appeared 241 times within the responses and was also used within other comments throughout the period. There seems to be no apparent NSW equivalent to this war cry and it is a unique part of the Queensland Maroons' history. Queensland Maroons fans were able to identify as fans by using the war cry to prove their identity, and also showing an emotional and intense attachment to the team, for example, '*QLD BORN QLD BRED AND I WHEN I DIE I'LL BE QLD DEAD; Maroon to the bone!!'*

Fans also used Facebook Live videos to state their location: '*Watching from New York*'; '*Watching in Ireland Go on the Maroons*,' and let the team know they were tuning in and supporting from overseas, although it was difficult to understand if these fans were national fans living overseas or international fans through analysing the comments. However, it was also apparent there were a number of New Zealand based fans identifying as Queensland

Maroon fans through comments such as '*QUEENZLANDER*'; '*Kiwi fan living in Brizzy – Go the Maroons*!'; '*OTARA NZ IS QQQQUUUUEEEENNSSLAND*'. Todd Greenberg (NRL CEO) believes that 'the people of New Zealand are a significant part of our supporter base' (*NZ Herald*, 2017). Facebook Live gives international based fans more access to the team. It provides a deeper insight to the team that typical television broadcasts based overseas do not cover and allows fans to potentially develop a deeper connection with the team. In comparison to other post types that are focused on reactive comments as fans respond after content is posted, Facebook Live allows for 'real time' support for the Queensland Maroons team, and players in the moment, e.g.

> *'Hi Kevin! Thank you so much for choosing Anthony Milford! Given a chance he can be a good player! Good luck on Game 1 and all the Origin games!'* and *'Kevvie is just sick of answering stupid questions from the media. Give him a break omg! Go Queensland!'*

In addition, as the team was not as successful on the field in comparison to the previous season, fans were still sending messages of encouragement directed at the team, e.g. '*Go mighty maroons you can beat the blues*', and directed at the players such as a comment directed at Kalyn Ponga on debut, e.g. '*Let's go Ponga!*' An emerging trend of comments was also apparent in 2018 with fans sending encouragement by rallying alongside the team and encouraging other fans to do the same, for example,

> *'Just support the team we have! We are rebuilding and finding our feet. Everyone knows better than the selectors, aye! GO OUR MIGHTY MAROONS* ❤❤❤❤ and …
> *Just support them ya scrubs stop bagging the team.'*

Fans were frustrated with selection choices and on field performance by the Queensland Maroons and were vocal about voicing their opinions in the press conference live video posts. These comments were often negative and were calling out specific players and the team in a negative tone. In response, other fans were showing their frustration at these 'fans' and used a rallying response to encourage fans to stop the negative comments and continue to support the team. Often these comments reflected that it was a rebuilding phase, encouraging fans to be positive and showed frustration that other fans weren't being supportive, e.g. '*Wish people would stop bagging the team that is picked and just get out there and support them.'* These types of comments may be an aspect of justifying their own support by engaging rallying behaviour through comments on these posts. Comments that are focused on 'rallying' may be a form of BIRFing (Basking in Reflected Failure). BIRFing is defined as actions constituting behaviours occurring when, despite their team losing, fans are "revelling in the loyalty, camaraderie, rebelliousness, and other alternative reasons for fanship", apart from support of an actual winning team (Campbell, Aiken & Kent, 2004, p. 153). Rallying related comments may emphasise a fan's continued devotion and loyalty towards a team, even following a loss, and are focused on encouraging other fans to remain loyal and continue to support the team.

5.4.2   Camaraderie

Camaraderie (*n* = 965) represents general social interactions and is focused on creating a group dynamic or temporary social viewing group. This type of interaction was focused on the acknowledgement of other fans, and was often used by stating another user's name as a form of social sharing and followed by a comment, e.g. '@*username[2]…Muzz is going to need a box of tissues, hope you are ok Muzz we know how much you loved Billy.'* If the other user

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[2] Username is removed from comment to ensure anonymity of Facebook user's comments.

was online when the broadcast was live, users would be notified if their Facebook friend was viewing the same live video which may have generated further comments when users were able to experience a shared moment (a characteristic that is not available on other post types).

These responses also validated the new emerging category of broadcaster interaction which involved fans talking directly to the broadcaster, as identified in the 2017 results. A large proportion (n=185) of the broadcaster interaction responses were fans simply leaving a comment saying 'hello.' This may be because when a broadcaster is live on Facebook and a user enters the live broadcast, a notification pops up to the user and suggests they '*let the broadcaster know they are here by saying hello*.' Facebook (2016) suggests the broadcaster boosts engagement by saying hello to commenters by name and answering their question as an "audience will be thrilled to hear you mention their name and answer their questions when you are live" (para. 5). However, QRL did not respond to any of the 'Hello' comments either by replying in the comments, or through the live video. Furthermore, the organisation did not formally acknowledge or interact with fans throughout any of the live video posts, but fans used the live video posts to let the broadcaster know about technological aspects of the live stream, e.g. '*Can't hear a thing',* and '*I am here for the live video – where is it?'* Feedback regarding volume and noise of the live video was the most common technological feedback across the live video posts and may suggest that users expect a high quality of volume that a phone is unable to provide.

Fans also used live video posts to talk directly to the athlete. While SM in general is great for interacting with an audience, there is always a delay in communication. Live video posts allowed a sense of 'real time' by allowing fans to see and experience what their favourite athlete was doing 'right in this moment' and providing an opportunity to send reactive

comments in that moment. For example, Billy Slater used a Facebook Live post to let fans know that he would be retiring at the conclusion of the 2018 State of Origin season, and fans took to this post to send their messages directly back to him, for example:

> *'I will be devastated as I haven't seen you in person until now. Dream is to see you playing on the field... I'm an avid fan of yours since I moved to Papua New Guinea for a work then that's the start that I fell in love with rugby sport because I saw you playing in State of Origin that is Year 2009...up till now that I'm living here in Australia I'm still very emotional when MS is playing and of course always cheering and screaming your name especially when the camera focus on you....because of you I got hooked in a rugby sport...as an Asian particularly from Philippines never thought I will be addicted in rugby...my days are not complete when rugby is not on.'*

Although it may be hypothesised that Billy Slater was not directly addressing individual comments or reading comments, the live video post may provide fans a sense of a 'direct line' to athletes and provides fans with an authentic communication with players.

5.4.3   Esteem

The Esteem category ($n = 550$) was formed with Queensland Maroons fans using comments to send praise to athletes and team which were positive in sentiment, and insults which were negative in sentiment. While throughout the 2017 State of Origin season fans used praise as one of the highest types of responses across live video posts but this was not the case in 2018. This may be due to the fact the on-field results were not as successful, and the type of content provided by QRL in live video format did not allow for praise comments. The number of comments with insults was also higher and rather than being focused on 'blasting' the

opposition which was a common feature in 2017, these comments were often targeted at insulting the Queensland Maroons team, players, selectors and coaches (and a direct contradiction to the support messages that others provided). Insult comments were often followed up by rallying responses which encouraged fans to stop being negative and 'bagging' the team and instead focus on support-based responses, e.g. '*Just support them ya scrubs stop bagging the team.*'

In comparison to the 2017 season, praise was most often directed at players rather than the team. Facebook Live was not used following the win in the third game and therefore fans did not have a chance to congratulate the team on a win with defeats in the first and second game of the series. Furthermore, as Facebook Live was used for the purpose of press conferences, these posts had a focus on a significant player retiring and a new debutant starting, and this may have also contributed to the focus of praise aimed towards players. The majority of these comments were focused on sending praise to Billy Slater by appreciating his State of Origin career, e.g. '*Well done on a marvellous SOO career Billy, your family would be proud of you in what you have achieved, I know Don would be. What better motivation than to do it for Billy.*' Furthermore, praise comments seldom congratulated or praised the selectors by emphasising 'great team' or 'great selection' and often fans used other responses such as insults, analysis or expertise as a response to team-naming press conferences. This may be a result of the 'change of the guard' throughout the 2018 State of Origin season with a number of key players no longer in the squad, and fans were reactive in their response to the squad selection in live video posts. Comments that were praising selectors often referred to other fans as 'armchair coaches or trolls', e.g. '*Congrats to all those involved in coaching and selecting. Every young man on the team is amazing and talented. What proud time for them*

and their families. I am so sick of all the arm chair trolls who know nothing but how to be rude', which may be another form of BIRFing and protecting self-identity.

Insults reflected the frustration of Queensland Maroons fans regarding the performance and selection of the Queensland Maroons in the 2018 State of Origin season. There was a common theme in the third game team announcement. With NSW already securing the series, fans were quick to use live video posts to vent their frustration on team selections ahead of the final game. These comments often addressed Kevin Walters [Queensland Maroons Coach] directly, e.g. '*Is Kevin coaching NSW? Cause he sure the hell isn't coaching QLD'* and '*Kevin Daley Walters you and the selectors have made a joke out of QLD this year with your selections. Think you should go back to the Broncos.'*

Insults were also directed at athletes, and were mainly focused on a new player in the squad – Daly Cherry-Evans (often referred to by fans as DCE), e.g. '*DCE is a selfish player and an arrogant pig'* and '*DCE is in?? Okay.... I support the Maroons, but I hope they lose Origin 3 now!! Titans fan!'* and '*DCE is the worst pick, he can't win a big game to save his life.*' In response to the addition of DCE into the Queensland Maroons squad the media suggested "He's been dismissed for those three years as too kooky a cat for the old-school Maroons… The bottom line is this: Queensland's least popular player is about to play again for Queensland" (Swanton, 2018, para. 1). As the live video posts were focused on press conferences, these comments directed at DCE were in response to a team selection announced by Kevin Walters. It may be suggested that QRL missed an opportunity to use a live video post featuring DCE to answer fans' questions and prove his inclusion to the squad. Although there were a high level of insult-driven responses directed at the Queensland Maroons team, coaching staff, players and selectors, this may be due to the fact QRL used

Facebook Live with a focus on press conferences in comparison to the 2017 season where the Live Video allowed the fan 'behind-the-scenes' access on the bus and inside the changing room with the fans. It may be suggested that press conferences generate more criticism with fans wanting to voice their opinion on team selections and choice, rather than gaining an insight into traditions and customs of the athletes and team.

5.4.4   Passion

Queensland Maroons fans responded to live video posts with passion ($n=787$), and expressed excitement, joy and frustration, and admiration of the players and teams. In comparison to the 2017 State of Origin season, comments were typically more focused on frustration, rather than excitement. Excitement comments were mostly focused around selection of Kayln Ponga with most comments simply stating his name followed by an exclamation of excitement, e.g. '*Ponga woohoo!*' and '*Ponga YESSS!*' However, frustration comments outweighed excitement comments and may have been due to the factor that the nature of live posts were focused on press conferences, team selections and the on-field results, and therefore fans were showing their frustration in the comments, e.g. '*Billy Slater deserves a better team than this crap*' and '*at the end of the day, we didn't play good enough.*' Research by Wann, Friedman, McHale, and Jaffe (2003) found that on-field results can affect the mood states of fans, and comments reflecting fan's sadness, disappointment and anger can be seen as coping mechanisms to handle negative emotions (Schubert & Seyffert, 2017).

Like Stavros et al.'s (2013) study on NBA teams Facebook comments, Queensland Maroons fans welcomed an opportunity to express their connection to the team in a short burst of emotion often filled with exclamation marks to show emphasis of their passion, e.g. '*NOOOOO!!!!*' and '*Happy days!!*'Comments expressing passion were often brief and less

likely to encourage interaction from other fans, e.g. '*WTF*' ['What the F***'] *and 'YTB'* ['Yeah the Boys']. These types of comments were typically in response to action as it was unfolding in the live video, and if a user was just reading the comments without watching the video, the comments may not have made sense as they were in response to a specific live moment, rather than the video as a whole.

5.4.5 Expertise

Queensland Maroons fans responded to live video posts to share their expertise ($n = 574$), to express analysis and facts about State of Origin and Queensland Maroons athletes and teams, and prediction of the teams' or player's likelihood of success in the upcoming game. As previously established, the type of post influenced the way fans were responding, and it may be hypothesised that press conferences generate a higher level of expertise than other content as fans want to offer their opinions on team selections. These comments were often lengthy and directed specifically at the selectors, coaches, players and team, for example:

> '*DCE is the best most experienced/skilled half back we have right now, the question is why was he not in the picture for game one? Yes Hunt had his name on it after making his debut last year but at the end of the day he is not a classic half back. To have a 5/8 like Munster who doesn't have the classic ball playing and kicking skills that a half does, then that's why DCE is the right fit for right now*'.

These types of comments often created further engagement, with fans responding either by agreeing or disagreeing with these comments and adding their opinions. Furthermore, some fans responded to these posts by calling fans 'armchair coaches' for having an opinion. As live video posts are in the moment, these lengthy posts often take a user time to type and

when comments are posted they may no longer be relevant to the video that is on screen. Therefore, discussion may be taking place after the broadcast with other fans responding post broadcast with their opinions on the footage they have viewed.

Many comments revealed that fans expressed a desire to discuss the game before it had even started, by posting predictions on how a specific player would play in an upcoming game, e.g. '*GI [Greg Inglis] FB [fullback]to inspire the boys from the back and can threaten from everywhere now, Morgs to slot in at centre... Milf and Ponga to fight it out for the bench spot.*' These comments often fuelled discussion from other fans to combat statements (often negative) with statistics and facts regarding players and the team by articulating their point of view, for example:

> *'It took Thurston, Cronk, Lockyer, Walters and Stuart various series to earn their positions and prove ability. Half's need time in that position at that level, and by the way you could have JT twice playing at half and 5/8 at the same time, yet if you're forwards are not eating up the meetings and gaining an advantage, ya not going to achieve! Yes Benny Hunt can play better, lead QLD and run NSW around! If given time, you failed to QLD. Shame on you'.*

These types of comments allowing fans to have the ability to actively acknowledge their connection to the team highlights the importance of a relational forum outside the sports arena to publicly display team identification (Stavros, et al., 2013). It was unclear who these comments were directed to, as they were often more general statements rather than addressing other fans, players or coaches. However, these comments did not influence the

live video post by QRL, and QRL provided no acknowledgement in the comments section, rather based on fan to fan interaction.

5.5.6 Help

While this category was the smallest response type, Queensland Maroon fans utilised the viewing social group of Facebook Live to respond to video content through the category of Help ($n = 130$). Research suggests that on SM brand pages, users with the same interests connect, and therefore can find others who are willing to share information (Bian, Liu, Agichtein, & Zha, 2008). Comments seeking knowledge were often in relation to missed information due to the nature of Facebook Live being 'in the moment', e.g. '*Came in late can someone tell me the team'* and '*Just joined. Is he retiring after this series or now?'* Questions asked by fans were often regarding the format change to play State of Origin on a Sunday and why the game was being played in Melbourne. These types of comments reflected fans seeking further information that may have been found through other sources online, however, may suggest that fans trust their 'community' for access, and information can be received in a quick manner. Fans were utilising the live video post comments section while watching the live video (which appears at the bottom in 'real time' on a desktop, or either visible across the screen on a mobile device or hidden with a swipe), to provide assistance for other fans who were seeking help. Fans used the 'reply' or '@' function to reply directly to the user asking the question, e.g. '*He's retiring from Origin after this series'* and '*June 6th. 8pm AEST'* and '*The last time game was played on Sunday night was 17 years ago 2001. Sunday night game is because all the clubs don't want a split round.'* Through providing a reply to other fans answering questions, fans were able to show their expertise, and this may have reflected their self-identity as a Queensland Maroons fan.

5.5 FACEBOOK LIVE MANAGERIAL PERSPECTIVES

This section reveals the results of the qualitative interview with the QRL Social Media manager who administers the Queensland Maroons Facebook page. It aims to understand QRL's managerial implications towards using Facebook Live streaming in the 2018 State of Origin Season. This qualitative interview was a follow up of the previous 2017 interview and aimed to gain an overall and broad understanding of the managerial implications behind Facebook Live, as well as compare usage between the two seasons.

5.5.1 Content Relevancy

In 2017, QRL utilised Facebook Live to 'open the door to fans' by allowing fans behind-the-scenes access, however their 2018 Facebook Live content did not offer fans any behind-the-scenes access and was focused on press conferences and interviews. The SM manager stated that:

> *'Live streaming is good for press conferences, because we are first on the scene with exclusive information. We can provide a live feed of that information to our consumers…. if it is team lists or anything like that…we are first in best dressed'.*

Although other media outlets send their media crews to cover these press conferences, it is an 'unwritten agreement' that QRL is the only media crew to employ Facebook Live to live stream press conferences. Although other media outlets may cover the same press conferences, as QRL are able to utilise Facebook Live for this type of content they believe the fans are able to see the content in a 'positive and authentic' light rather than through media outlets that may ask certain questions around player selections to put negative spins on their media stories. Even though the information is not exclusive, the other media outlets

must go and package up content to release information at the conclusion of the press conference, while the Queensland Maroons are able to provide their fans information in real time as it happened. However, this comment and apparent position by QRL is noteworthy given the response at the end of the 2017 series was that the team would be moving away from live streaming press conferences, as it was not deemed to be 'exclusive' content or engaging for fans.

Furthermore, the live streams in 2018 were broadcast for longer periods of time than in 2017. While in 2017 the live streams were 'snippets' of behind-the-scenes footage that fans were able to consume and engage with, in 2018 they were often broadcast for longer periods of time and viewing time was shorter. Although QRL believe they are monitoring fan engagement while live streaming, it may be suggested that the press conferences have a higher level of 'down time' than behind-the-scenes content and although the engagement is being monitored by QRL, it is still being broadcast while the fans are not engaged.

Although the season was not successful on the field, the SM manager believes that the on-field results did not affect their SM strategy as they were instead focused on providing positive content for their consumers and is flexible and dependent on fan engagement. The SM manager indicated that they intend to use Facebook Live again on the Queensland Maroons Facebook page in 2019, and although they have not yet planned their strategic marketing plan, they intend to focus on using Facebook Live for press conferences as they believe this is adding the most value for their consumer. This is a notable statement by QRL, as these research insights suggest that using Facebook Live for press conferences is not as engaging as behind-the-scenes content. In 2017, the live posts with the most engagement were videos that provided behind-the-scenes or extended access to the team, and press

conferences were the least engaging. In 2018, the content that was most engaging for fans were opportunities to relive the glory days, or player insights (most often native video). This could be seen by QRL as an opportunity to extend the 'live' feature in 2019 by utilising these insights into gaining a better understanding of what their fans value.

5.5.2   Resourcing

QRL stated they couldn't provide more behind-the-scenes content or player experiences for fans through live video posts due to resourcing, and the already high media demands of players:

> *It comes down to the resources we have. We obviously have plans in the future to do that, but in the meantime, we are doing what we can, as during those periods it's really busy, it's all hands on deck, everybody is trying to do a million things at once…. Player access can be difficult as the players often deal with the media 24/7, so we provide a bit of an environment where they can get away from that, while see us as part of the team. We are building that trust and relationship with the players as well, so it's sort of not crossing that line. During the Origin period the high-profile players are often a hot commodity when it comes to media access.*

The outside pressures and commitments to media that players, coaches and staff must meet while at the same time providing value to their own fan base is a common issue for teams and organisations to manage. In 2017, the SM manager identified that the SM strategy was built upon opening access to fans and extending the fan experience and it may be suggested that the current live streaming strategy of only offering press conferences through Facebook Live is not meeting this goal. Although the player accessibility was identified as a barrier by QRL,

through creative strategy, QRL could overcome these issues and outside media pressures to deliver value to their own fan base.

The SM manager believes that a 'good' live stream is made up of two aspects: the quality of the live stream; and adding value to the consumer. When creating a SM strategy, QRL's focus is on content that is interesting by asking 'will this add value to the consumer?' and 'will the consumer benefit from watching this video in live format?' However the only content that was broadcast through the Queensland Maroons Facebook page throughout the 2018 State of Origin series were press conferences. Therefore, it is difficult to determine what 'content' the SM is referring to outside of press conferences. Although it was identified by the SM manager in 2017 that behind-the-scenes and player access content was engaging for Queensland Maroons fans, this was not replicated in 2018 even though QRL believed this content was adding value to their consumer by receiving the benefits of 'real time'.

The SM manager suggested that while some organisations use Facebook Live to 'go live 24/7', it can detract from the value of a live stream. QRL believe that they use Facebook Live Video within reason and ensure the feature is not 'overused' so the concept of 'live' is still exciting for viewers:

> *'There is time and place for it (Facebook Live). If it is going to add significant value* [it was not indicated how significant value was measured as to whether or not to include in live streaming] *with live streaming, or whether we can just film it, cut it and post a different time that's more suitable'.*

As identified in the 2017 qualitative interview, QRL utilise a Diji Osmo to push their videos to Facebook Live. Although in 2018 QRL also utilised a Teradek[3] that is put through a specialised video camera, attached to a computer, which is then used to generate a stream key to push through Facebook Live. The SM manager believes that there is less room for error than using a phone, it provides a better quality of audio and allows comments to be monitored through the software. As this is a complex set up, Facebook Live video posts are often planned rather than being 'spur of the moment'. This is a notable difference, as in 2017 the SM manager revealed that all live streams were not planned or part of the strategic plan. They were often used in moments where they believed it was 'something the fans would want to see'. However, with the movement to only use Facebook Live for press conferences, the SM manager indicated that Facebook Live was part of the SM strategy and resources were set up ahead of press conferences to ensure fans were able to consume information in 'real time':

> *It is a lot of structure, and a lot of planning. Like how long we want to film for etc., as there are different spikes in engagement and a constant monitoring of this engagement is important when we are live streaming.*

5.5.3   Enhanced Reach and Engagement

The SM manager stated that they believe that engagement differs across different types of content. For example, they believe they have typically three categories of video: Facebook live press conferences, native video highlight packages, and native video interviews or stories (which they refer to as behind-the-scenes content). This differs from the insights of this research which identifies video content as either native video or live video. Furthermore, this

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[3] Teradek is an innovator of wireless video devices and platforms that facilitate creative acquisition and live event broadcasting in full HD.

differs from 2017 where QRL used different variations of Facebook Live content). In relation to live video posts, the SM manager believes that from a fan's point of view, engagement is reactive and has more room for people to be vocal and frustrated about the content in real time. However, in comparison, a highlights package posted through a native video post is showcasing a positive aspect and may attract a less negative reaction. This suggestion by QRL may be indicative of their 2018 live streaming strategy by focusing on more 'positive' content with a focus on native video highlights rather than creating live video posts that may attract negative comments and attention.

The Queensland Maroons also believe that if the same nature of content was posted across different post types, the way in which consumers engage with this content would differ. For example, if the Queensland Maroons utilised Facebook Live to live stream in the changing rooms following a win, it would affect the ways users are engaging as this type of content is time sensitive and 'in the moment':

> *'It wouldn't have the same effect if we did it the next day unless it was say a highlight package, but where as if it was a live feed walking around the dressing room, talking to people, it's authentic… It comes down to the same thing with a press conference, if you did it live then the news is fresh and new, whereas if you post it later, everyone else has already posted it and it's no longer exclusive and fans already know what's going on.'*

As the SM manager indicated previously, engagement after a video is 'live' is an afterthought and engagement is focused on the moment the video is broadcast live. While some types of live streams may still be engaging and 'exclusive' in the moment by providing access to fans

to see athletes' or teams' unique traditions or rituals, a press conference may not be engaging once the video is no longer in the moment. As soon as a press conference is no longer live and being broadcast by the Queensland Maroons, fans may be able to read articles and snippets of the important information, or highlights in other media outlines and can then consume the information in a more concise time rather than viewing a 30 minute press conference. Therefore, although some types of live content may encourage engagement after the fact, press conferences do not encourage engagement after the 'live' factor.

While Facebook markets its 'Live' feature as allowing users to 'broadcast to the largest audience in the world' (Facebook, 2018), this may not be the case. The SM manager believes that with the changing algorithm associated with video views on Facebook, it has made it difficult to reach a larger audience without investing money behind content and it is more difficult for organisations to achieve higher organic reach. They believe that due to these changes there has been a significant decrease in reach and views for content in 2018 in comparison to 2017 content. This was consistent with the results from the insight data, and across all post types there was a noticeable decline in both reach and engagement during the research period. In 2017, QRL believed that a successful post on game day should reach over four million people (it was not mentioned how this figure was derived) and be focused on allowing the fan to celebrate alongside the Queensland Maroons. However, in 2018, the SM manager stated that a successful post is any video that reaches over 100,000 people and if it doesn't then the content type needs to be reviewed and examined to understand why it didn't work and how can it be done differently to encourage engagement and interaction. This is a significant decrease in reach, and the SM manager indicated that this was due to the change in Facebook algorithms.

In terms of engagement, the SM manager previously stated in 2017 that engagement is difficult to measure, and it is more about the type of content posted and how fans are reacting to this content. However, in 2018 they stated that engagement is the way fans interact with content as an Insight summary of post reach, click, likes, comments and shares. The SM stated that in the past the Queensland Maroons Facebook page was focused on comments over other types of engagement, and he believes that due to the change in Facebook algorithm comments no longer have the same impact they did two years ago (the more comments a post had, the more organic reach the post received). He stated that in 2018 the focus was typically likes and clicks and suggests that '*typically, if we have content on our website, and we link to it from social media and a large portion of people are clicking on it then it's positive for us'*. Although the SM manager stated that previously they were focused on comments, the focus on website clicks was mentioned as a priority in 2017 and was also prominent as a focus in 2018. Therefore, it may be suggested that QRL view Facebook as a vehicle for increasing website traffic rather than as a means of furthering engagement through the SM platform. Facebook Live posts did not feature any links or pinned posts in the comments that directed website traffic and therefore this may further emphasise QRL's view of Facebook Live within their strategy.

Apart from the changing Facebook algorithm, QRL believes that post type can also influence levels of reach and engagement. The Queensland Maroons Facebook page uses highlight videos to boost their overall page engagement as they believe these types of posts have the highest levels of engagement. For example:

> *'We will have a lot of content around articles, and we will often use videos to push*
>
> *that average reach and engagement level up. Posting a highlight video could be*

current, it could be a previous highlight from years ago – we just use that as a means to boost engagement'.

Based on this statement, it could be suggested that live video may not fit within this engagement model and QRL do not see Facebook Live posts as engaging. However, QRL indicated that content such as highlight videos from current and previous players and teams are what boosts engagement. Therefore through understanding what is engaging fans, QRL may use Facebook Live posts with specific content in mind to boost engagement such as featuring an opportunity for Q&A (questions and answers) with a Queensland State of Origin 'legend', or creating a live show from camp which highlights players preparing for the series.

5.5.4   Fan Responses – Encouraging Interaction

The on-field results of the Queensland Maroons in 2018 differed from previous years with the 'changing of the guard' and 'new blood' coming into the team. This meant fans who had been on board for the 'Queensland dynasty' were not familiar with seeing unsuccessful State of Origin seasons by the Queensland Maroons. In the sport context, a dynasty can be defined as an individual athlete or team who dominate their sport or league for an extended period of time. The SM manager stated that:

'Obviously it comes with success too, when you are so used to success and you come to a season where we didn't obviously win the series there was a lot of frustration, because Game 1 we didn't win in Melbourne, then we went to Sydney in Game 2 and we lost, so it adds to that frustration and negativity.'

While the results on the field appear to have influenced the way fans responded to Facebook Live posts through their comments throughout the 2018 State of Origin season by responding with more negative sentiments, and vocal about selection strategies, the SM manager believes that on- field results do not change their SM strategy.

He stated that following the press conference live posts, they often try to pick out positives and start traction on things that are positive to resonate with fans and discourage negative fan responses:

> *'Even though some people may not have been happy about it from that perspective, we then reinforce the selection with some feel good stories that sort of change that stigma, especially around selections. People are going to have their opinions regardless, but if we can change their perception or outlook that's a positive'.*

This is an interesting approach as it suggests that they are influencing their fans by creating specific content as 'damage control' and attempting to change the relationship between the fan and the organisation. Rather than use Facebook Live to broadcast press conferences that generate negative comments, QRL could use another type of post to announce selections and then include further details on selections and intertwine the 'feel good stories'.

However, the Queensland Maroons Facebook page does not reply to fans or delete negative comments as they believe that a key aspect of social media platforms is that it gives fans a voice and a sense of freedom of speech. This rationale was similar to the approach stated in 2017 which was not to anger any fans who get ignored when some comments are being responded to, and others ignored. This strategy suggests that the organisation is not utilising a

RM approach within their SM strategy as although Facebook is being used to communicate with the fans by posting specific content that generates discussion, the fans are responding and talking to the organisation but the organisation is not responding to the fans. The SM manager also suggests there are different types of 'fans' that State of Origin attracts, which influences the way fans are responding to Facebook Live videos:

'There are a lot of fans who aren't your typical rugby league [fan] who will pipe up around Origin time and that creates a lot of confusion with selections and stuff when people don't have that knowledge compared to your everyday NRL fan who follows their team and the competition consistently. It creates confusion because a lot of people aren't up to date with everything… it's a different type of fan with Origin, more of a seasonal fan.'

As Facebook Live is giving fans a voice, fans can use the opportunity of Facebook Live to post comments to the team during the live broadcast which may give a sense of talking directly to the Queensland Maroons in 'real time' and express their emotions (either negative or positive) directly to the organisation, as if they are a Facebook friend rather than a 'brand'. However, the SM manager believes that they are not really looking for a personal outlook and are more of a business just focused on competitions.

'I don't think we are a personable brand as it's more of a business outlook and that's also what we try and focus on rather than a personable approach.'

This comment further suggests that QRL may not be utilising Facebook as a RM tool or achieving any of the advantages that could be achieved by using SM as a RM tool for fan

communication. Although the team competes in a short season and is not a regular NRL team, QRL has emphasised they want to stay 'relevant' even when State of Origin is not being broadcast. The way in which fans are responding to Facebook Live posts suggests that they are embracing the Queensland Maroons' 'brand' as a person and expect the Queensland Maroons to have a personable approach rather than treating them as a business transaction. This is a key area that QRL could improve for future SM strategies.

5.6 ENHANCING FAN ENGAGEMENT

It was established throughout this chapter that content is an important factor of live video to help sport organisations to enhance fan engagement. While it was identified in the 2017 qualitative interview that QRL would no longer be utilising live video for the purpose of press conferences as it was deemed 'less engaging for fans', the results from 2018 highlighted that QRL only used one type of content across Facebook Live – press conferences. As proposed in Section 4.6, it is suggested that offering content through a different form of live video content type may influence levels of fan engagement. As QRL used live video only for the purpose of press conferences throughout the 2018 State of Origin season, the remaining section examines the seven types of live video content that were proposed in section 4.6 and how these may be applied to a content analysis of live video posts across the 2018 season.

5.6.1 Behind the Scenes

These types of videos proved to be the most engaging in 2017, however they were not offered to fans throughout the 2018 State of Origin season. QRL used live video for the purpose of press conferences within camp, during training sessions, and at the airport, which may have been an opportunity to further extend the experience for fans and provide a glimpse into the

lead up to State of Origin. While this content was not deemed engaging for fans in press conference form, it may have encouraged further fan engagement if fans were able to see the players waiting to board a flight or at kicking practice – similar to what was deemed as engaging for fans in 2017. When QRL allowed fans to come into the changing room with the Queensland Maroons to celebrate the 2017 State of Origin series victory, it was immersive, interactive, social and immediate. Comparatively, the team utilised similar content following the on-field success in Game 3 in a video post to showcase the Queensland Maroons celebrating a win and the team farewelling Billy Slater. The video post was posted the day after the win which may suggest it was no longer 'in the moment' and received lower engagement than the live video post. It may be proposed that if this had been a live video post it would have provided opportunities to enhance fan engagement. Through a live video post fans may have had the opportunity to feel part of the Queensland Maroons team, and through the immersive qualities of live video posts have the sense of being in the changing rooms alongside Billy Slater in his final Queensland representative game. The on-field results influenced the content being shown by QRL throughout the 2018 season, and rather than providing fans with behind-the-scenes views, it was orchestrated by media press conferences and then 'book ended' with 'feel good pieces' in native video format to try to create a sense of positivity amongst Queensland Maroons fans.

5.6.2   Questions and Answers

QRL did not use Question and Answers videos during the 2018 State of Origin season, however the majority of videos featured athletes and coaching staff answering questions from media. QRL could increase the interactivity on these posts, and in return increase the level of fan engagement by allowing fans to ask questions following a media conference and selecting certain questions to answer at the conclusion of the video. This may encourage fans to leave

comments and watch the press conference in its entirety with the chance of the Queensland Maroons answering their question at the conclusion of the video.

5.6.3   Breaking News

QRL did not utilise any breaking news content, however a live video post was used to feature Billy Slater addressing the media announcing his retirement from State of Origin. This may have been more engaging if the Queensland Maroons had used a breaking news live video rather than a press conference as the information would have been exclusive to the Queensland Maroons rather than information available to all media outlets. Furthermore, fan interaction may have been encouraged if there were opportunities for Billy Slater to read fan's comments that were often focused on celebrating and praising him for his efforts throughout his career. This would provide fans with the opportunity to collaborate on the live video and thank him personally.

5.6.4   Live Shows

While this type of content was not provided in 2017 or 2018, QRL indicated that they would still like to feature this type of content within their SM plan, however believe Queensland Maroons athletes already have a high media workload in the lead up to the State of Origin series. However, if these posts were planned ahead of time and athletes were aware of this commitment, it may allow QRL to create specific content that allows fans to see behind the scenes throughout camp, interviews, and fan feedback, which may enhance interaction and fan engagement prior to a State of Origin match. Furthermore, it may be suggested that if live video was authentically 'behind the scenes', simply capturing 'business as usual' would not constitute as extra workload for players, in comparison to a native video that may be scripted, rehearsed and staged for the camera.

5.6.5   Events

There were no events posted by QRL throughout the 2018 season in live video format. Each year the Queensland Maroons visit one town in Queensland to meet and greet with fans in the lead up to the State of Origin series. In 2017, QRL used a live video post to share this experience with Queensland Maroons fans all over the world as the team visited Mackay. However, in 2018 the team visited Hervey Bay, QLD, and this may have been a missed opportunity for fan engagement; to have an immersive experience and be involved in this event through a live video post.

5.6.6   Interviews

QRL SM manager stated that access to players was a barrier for providing live video posts throughout camp, however in the 2018 State of Origin season QRL posted video posts featuring Queensland Maroons athletes being interviewed by members of the QRL media team. These posts generated an average of 15 comments per post and if these were posted in live video format they may have received further interaction from fans. Rather than watching a curated video from the QRL media team featuring highlights of players juxtaposed with interview footage, the live video format may have allowed fans to interact with the broadcast and 'speak directly' to the QRL media or athlete and therefore feel more involved than with native video through a sense of 'real time'.

5.6.7   Press Conferences

Press conferences were the only type of live video post to feature on the Queensland Maroons Facebook page throughout the collection period. These posts were less engaging (in terms of engagement rates) than other types of posts and fans often only viewed these videos for a fraction of overall viewing time (rather than watching the video for the full duration).

Furthermore, it emerged that there are different variations of press conferences and these may further impact fan engagement. For example, press conferences that featured crucial information, for example an announcement of the team were more engaging than content featuring a coach's thoughts in the lead up to a game. Therefore, content that features crucial information that is exclusive may increase fan engagement as an announcement live video rather than a press conference.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Following the 2017 State of Origin season, the results from 2018 also suggested that overall, live video posts do not have a higher level of reach and engagement than other post types. As the Queensland Maroons were not successful in 2018 (lost the State of Origin series), the type of comments reflected these results and fans were more negative in sentiment using posts to respond with expertise and offer opinions on selection. A new type of response was identified which was deemed as 'rallying'. Fans were responding to other fans to encourage support of the team during a difficult season and encouraging fans to stop being negative about the team. It may be suggested that these responses were due to the fact that QRL used live video posts for the sole purpose of press conferences. This was interesting, as QRL indicated in 2017 that they would no longer use live video for this purpose due to fan disengagement. Results indicate that fans were not engaged with press conferences in comparison to behind-the-scenes content, however QRL contradicted this view in 2018 as they believed press conferences were important for fan engagement.

The following chapter considers results from the 2017 and 2018 data sets and provides discussion in relation to relevant literature to provide insight into these phenomena.

CHAPTER SIX

DISCUSSION

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

This chapter draws together the results from the two previous findings chapters, tying together the three studies utilised within this research. In doing so, it links results to previous literature discussed in chapter two. This chapter aims to provide a discussion of how live video posts compare to other types of posts (photo, video, link, text only) in terms of reach engagement. Furthermore, it aims to provide an overall insight into live video (specifically Facebook Live) and provide managerial implications for sport organisations in terms of challenges and characteristics of live video within a SM context. The chapter concludes with consideration of results in terms of fan engagement, and how results influence fan engagement through the utilisation of live video.

6.1   REACH

Research has suggested that Facebook Live video posts may have a higher organic reach than other post types due to the push notifications of Facebook Live content (Ahmed, 2017). Facebook creates a notification for users who follow a Facebook page when the page is live and adjusts the newsfeed algorithm, so Facebook Live videos have priorities on a Facebook user's newsfeed (Mosseri, 2018). However, Table 6.1 identifies that on average, video posts had the highest organic reach for Facebook users ($n = 207,987$) and fans ($n = 146,193$). Although Facebook puts emphasis on push notifications for their Facebook Live feature for fans of pages, for the Queensland Maroons Facebook page, live video posts have the lowest average reach for fans ($n = 97,148$).

Table 6.1　　*Lifetime Reach per Post type (2017 and 2018)*

Type of Post	Minimum	Maximum	Average	Rank
Organic Reach				
Video	235,970	180,004	207,987	1
Live Video	162,182	133,742	147,962	3
Photo	134.627	232,359	183,493	2
Links	133,742	96,760	115,251	4
Fan Reach				
Video	178,815	113,570	146,193	1
Live Video	113,440	80,855	97,148	4
Photo	161,048	107,073	134,061	2
Links	120,686	89,896	105,291	3

6.1.1　Content Relevancy

The type of content that was posted throughout the research period appeared to be a factor in influencing reach. As Bingham, Conner & Pink (2015) argue, organisations need to focus on what makes content personal and conversation-worthy. It is important for organisations to consider how content can create engagement. As Peters (2019) mentions, by engaging with a post (either through reactions, comments or shares), a Facebook user can further a Facebook post's organic reach. Therefore, to influence organic reach, the type of Facebook Live content that a Facebook fan page uses is important to encourage users to continue viewing, and react while watching (either by commenting, reacting or sharing the post).

The Queensland Maroons were successful on the field in 2017 and won the State of Origin series, however, after a dominant decade, in 2018 the on-field results were not successful, and the Queensland Maroons lost the series. In the 2017 season, content that had the highest levels of reach allowed fans to celebrate and exhibit behaviours that scholars argue reflect basking in reflected glory (BIRG) alongside the Queensland Maroons (Table 6.2).

Table 6.2   *Top Ten Overall Posts by Lifetime Total Reach (2017 and 2018)*

Content Description (2017)	Total Reach	Content Description (2018)	Total Reach
Video highlight package of a Queensland Maroons athlete's playing career.	2,700,037	Video highlight package of the Queensland Maroons team throughout their history.	1,412,936
Video celebrating a Queensland Maroons athlete's playing career juxtaposed with interviews from past and present athletes and coaches.	2,169,966	Video highlight package of a Queensland Maroons athlete's playing career.	651,145
A photo celebrating a Queensland Maroons career game milestone.	1,869,238	Video celebrating a Queensland Maroons athlete's playing career juxtaposed with interviews from past and present athletes and coaches.	607,215
A live video providing fans behind-the-scenes access to the Queensland Maroons changing room after winning the State of Origin series.	1,761,623	A photo post encouraging Facebook users to update their profile picture with the official Queensland Maroons frame.	598,406
A photo of Queensland Maroons athletes after winning the State of Origin series.	1,506,256	A video providing fans behind-the-scenes access to the Queensland Maroons changing room after winning State of Origin Game 3.	480,111
A video of Queensland Maroons players lifting the State of Origin shield after winning the State of Origin.	1,393,726	Video highlight package of a Queensland Maroons athlete's playing career.	415,692
A link to QRL website with an article announcing the Queensland Maroons Squad.	1,061,463	A video interviewing a Queensland Maroons athlete.	388,726
A photo of a Queensland Maroons player with an Australian PGA golfer who shares the same name.	1,060,967	A photo of Queensland Maroons athletes after losing the State of Origin series.	385,658
A photo celebrating a Queensland Maroons career game milestone.	931,194	A link to QRL website with an article announcing the Queensland Maroons squad.	317,928
A photo of a Queensland Maroons athlete leaving the field with his child after a game.	906,546	A photo of Queensland Maroons athletes after winning a State of Origin game.	313,476

Trail et al. (2012) suggest that "as the team wins, fans want to promote their association with

a successful other so that they can BIRG and make others think that the fan is as successful as

the team" (p. 345). Comparatively, as the season results did not allow fans to BIRG in 2018,

posts with high levels of reach highlighted a potential positive association of a team or

player's historical performance. These types of posts may allow fans to bask in past glory

(BIPG) when the success is not present. Fans who use posts to BIPG, may use posts to reflect on the 'glory days', evoke nostalgic thoughts, and remember athletes and moments when the team was successful on the field (see section 6.2 for further discussion regarding BIPG).

Posts that may have a higher level of reach contain a potential positive association of a team or player's historical performance and allow fans to BIRG or BIPG and fit typically within a Facebook video post. Facebook Live does not allow for videos to broadcast content celebrating a player or team's history as it involves multiple sources of video history to be juxtaposed together to create a highlight package that may evoke nostalgic thoughts or opportunities to BIRG or BIPG.

Furthermore, there appears to be an evident reduction in total reach in 2018 compared to 2017. There is only one post from 2018 (video highlight package from Queensland Maroons history) that displays higher reach than the last two posts from 2017. Without any statistical interference or testing to support the reasoning, it is difficult to explain this reduction; however I propose the following reasons: Facebook's changing algorithm, the type of content posted, and/or the on-field results.

Craig (2018) suggests that as there are high volumes of content being created daily alongside Facebook's changing newsfeed algorithm, organisations should focus on understanding what type of content inspires meaningful interaction to organically boost post reach. Based on this rationale, I would suggest that post reach insight is insignificant without also understanding post engagement, as both directly influence the overall post.

6.2   ENGAGEMENT

Engagement is important for an organisation to measure as it provides what content fans may be interested in, both within academia and industry. Engagement is recognised as one of the most important goals of SM implementation (Williams & Chin, 2010). Academic scholars have previously studied engagement on Facebook by measuring user's reactions, comments, and shares on a post (Leung, 2012; Bonsón & Ratkai, 2013; Grabowski, 2015; Luarn et al., 2015; Zudrell, 2016; Agrawal, Gupta, & Yousaf, 2018). Additionally, literature suggests that engagement differs per type of engagement (Grabowski, 2015), and therefore I initially examined each type of engagement per post separately rather than as a sum of engagement.

The results (see Table 6.3) reveal that Facebook users were most likely to react to photo posts ($n = 6,583$), while in comparison live video posts ($n = 1,803$) generated a lower amount of reactions. This type of engagement is referred to as 'low-level' engagement (Mariani et al., 2016) as reactions may be the simplest action users can utilise to interact with posts and require little effort. Therefore, photo posts are easy for a user to engage with as when scrolling down the newsfeed it does not take much effort or time for a Facebook user to digest and react to a photo post. In comparison a live video post may require time to view and while a user may be engaged through viewing the video, they do not necessarily react to the content.

Table 6.3   *Lifetime Engagement per Post Type (2017 and 2018)*

Type of Post	Minimum	Maximum	Average	Rank
Reactions				
Videos	6,050	1,510	3,780	2
Live Video	2,816	791	1,803	3
Photos	9,655	3,510	6,583	1
Links	1,806	1,044	1,425	4
Shares				
Videos	1,091	510	801	1
Live Video	315	70	193	3
Photos	984	425	705	2
Links	116	45	81	4
Comments				
Videos	476	226	351	3
Live Video	567	508	538	1
Photos	596	374	485	2
Links	208	134	171	4

Through sharing a post, Facebook users are able to increase the reach of the content and a "share can often be better than a reaction because it's a much stronger social endorsement and is far more likely to get noticed in the newsfeed of the friends of the person who has shared" (Mendelsohn, 2018, para. 4). A Facebook share is a form of word of mouth marketing (WOMM), as a Facebook user is spreading the word about an organisation to their network. Haikel-Elsabeh et al. (2019) believe that the more strongly the user identifies with a brand, they more likely they are to share a Facebook post with information about the brand.

My research found video posts ($n = 801$) were shared most often, and live video posts were shared rarely ($n = 193$); (Table 6.3). Shares may indicate that a user may not only want to

react with a post but want to further their relationship with the sport organisation by sharing the content with their network. Video posts may have received a higher number of shares than other types of post due to the content that was used in these posts, providing fans opportunities to BIPG, player and team highlights and users may feel inclined to relive these moments with their own networks. Paletz, Auxier and Golonka (2019) suggest high share content tends to trigger a high-arousal emotion, like amusement, fear or anger, as opposed to a low-arousal emotion like sadness or contentment. In comparison, the type of content that was featured in live video posts may not trigger these high-arousal emotions (such as press conferences in 2018) and therefore these were seldom shared with networks.

Furthermore, the format of Facebook Live may not be optimal for a user to share. As users are viewing the video in the moment, they may not share the video in comparison to a photo or video post which is not in the moment and can be shared to their networks after viewing the image. When a user clicks 'share' it will stop the live video and present a post to be shared on a user's timeline and ask the Facebook user to provide a caption alongside the video. This may take the user away from viewing the stream and as the stream is live, they may have a sense of 'missing out' on the action.

Commenting or replying to a comment may be referred to as the highest level of engagement on a Facebook post (Mariani et al., 2016), as comments take longer periods of time for engagement in comparison to a reaction or share. Facebook is focused on placing a higher emphasis on 'meaningful interactions' as a measure of increased visibility. Corcoran, (2018) suggests that "comments are considered one way of measuring the degree of meaningful interaction" (para. 1). In relation to Facebook Live, Mosseri (2018) suggests that live video

posts often lead to discussion amongst viewers on Facebook and on average get six times as many comments as regular videos.

My research found live video posts (*n=*538) generated the highest amount of comments in comparison to other types of posts (see Table 6.3). Although this figure is not six times as many comments as regular videos (*n* = 351), it is still slightly higher than other post types. Comments on Facebook Live may allow sport organisations to engage with their audience in a way that is normally not possible – in real time. Although previous research suggests Twitter offers real-time interaction (Sheffer & Schultz, 2010; Tiago, Tiago, Faria, & Couto, 2018), by giving a direct voice for the athlete, coach, and manager to the fans (Gibbs & Hayne, 2013), and it has the potential to "change the athlete/fan interaction forever" (Gregory, 2009, p. 124), Facebook Live posts have further potential to extend this interaction.

While Twitter allows sport organisations or athletes to tweet with a 280 character limit, it is generally text only and requires both the fan and the sport organisation to happen to be online simultaneously for conversation. Furthermore, when fans are interacting with a tweet, there often is not a 'face' behind the tweet and fans may be unaware who they are really tweeting. In comparison, Facebook Live posts provide fans with a sense of 'real time' as the video is live and, in the moment,, and may encourage a higher number of fan posts wanting the opportunity to talk to athletes, coaches, and managers in a two-way conversation. Facebook users may comment on a live video by saying 'Hello' or 'Hello, Sarah from New Zealand is here' to acknowledge to the broadcaster they are viewing the stream. As there is a sense of immediacy by acknowledging the sport organisation is online, fans may use the live post to ask questions or have discussions with other fans in the comments as the action unfolds. When the sport organisation answers questions, it may provide fans with a sense of belonging

and acknowledgement and encourage other fans to comment for the chance to also be acknowledged. However, QRL did not utilise Facebook Live posts to answer questions or generate questions with fans yet these types of posts still received the highest amount of comments. This finding may be due to the content that was posted through live posts which generated conversations. For example, when the Queensland Maroons won the 2017 State of Origin series, QRL used a Facebook Live post to show fans what was happening in real time as the team celebrated their victory in the changing rooms.

Live video may create a form of intimacy between subject and viewer that can't often be achieved by text or a character limit. Rather than the traditional sense of intimacy of immediate human or communal experience, "live video can convey a sense of being there at the event much more viscerally than other forms of reporting or media" (Kavada & Treré, 2019, p.3). Furthermore, while this may be true for video in general, Thorburn (2017) suggests that live broadcasts provoke strong emotions which can often be difficult to tone down or censor through sense of real-time transmission. Queensland Maroons fans were able to not only view what was happening in real-time in the changing rooms, but also leave comments expressing their congratulations and support for the team as they joined in with the team's celebrations. Another type of live post that may generate a high level of comments are press conferences. As the information in that particular moment of a live broadcast is exclusive to the viewer (as other media outlets have to package up the content, and distribute post press conference), it may generate a higher level of comments as users react to the information in real time (either as a positive or negative sentiment). Sport organisations may further engagement in these types of posts by allowing fans to ask questions in the press conference and having team officials or athletes pick questions to answer through the live video.

The '*Facebook Engagement Rate*' is helpful for organisations to understand what percentage of their audience are viewing their Facebook post and are engaging with the content – whether that be through reacting, sharing or commenting. In the case of the Queensland Maroons, video posts have the highest user engagement rate which is not surprising as video posts across the differing measures of engagement have been high performing and encourage user engagement. Furthermore, it has been identified that these types of posts generally have a higher level of reach than other post types.

Online statistics portal Statista (2018) displays the average Facebook post engagement rates in Australia in 2017, by post type. Facebook photo posts had the highest engagement rate with an average engagement rate of around 6.1%. Video posts have a slightly smaller engagement rate of 5.1%, and links 3.83%. Although these statistics do not consider live video as its own post type, it may be suggested that overall the Queensland Maroons Facebook page has an above average engagement rate across all post types. Rather than post types, engagement may also be influenced by the type of content that is being posted by a Facebook Page. Cvijikj and Michaelles (2013) believe that the engagement may be influenced by entertaining and informative content while Thompson et al. (2014) found behind-the-scenes content encouraged greater fan interaction and engagement.

As the results related to reach in section 6.1 were reported, content that had the highest levels of engagement was content that allowed fans to celebrate and BIRG alongside the Queensland Maroons (see Table 6.4). Posts that had the highest level of engagement had a potential positive association with a team or player's historical performance and fit typically within a Facebook video post. Content that was engaging during the research period was most often video and photo posts that allowed fans to have access behind the scenes during

the lead up to the State of Origin series. For example: photo posts of the team training or at

fan days.

Table 6.4   *Top Ten Overall Posts by Lifetime Engaged Users (2017 and 2018)*

2017 Content Description	Total Engagement	2018 Content Description	Total Engagement
Video highlight package of a Queensland Maroons athlete's playing career.	275,230	Video highlight package of the Queensland Maroons team throughout their history.	286,974
Video celebrating a Queensland Maroons athlete's playing career juxtaposed with interviews from past and present athletes and coaches.	226,524	Video highlight package of a Queensland Maroons athlete's playing career.	103,999
A live video providing fans behind the scenes access to the Queensland Maroons changing room after winning the State of Origin series.	225,279	Video highlight package of a Queensland Maroons athlete's playing career.	70,326
A video of Queensland Maroons players lifting the State of Origin shield after winning the State of Origin.	132,788	A video providing fans behind the scenes access to the Queensland Maroons changing room after winning the State of Origin series.	64,525
A photo post encouraging Facebook users to update their profile picture with the official Queensland Maroons frame.	121,603	Video celebrating a Queensland Maroons athlete's playing career juxtaposed with interviews from past and present athletes and coaches.	52,228
A photo post series of the Queensland Maroons training.	107,877	A link to a QRL website article regarding the Queensland Maroons captaincy.	49,040
A photo of the Queensland Maroons boarding a team bus to a fan day.	97,515	A photo of Queensland Maroons athletes after losing the State of Origin series.	47,702
A photo post of a Queensland Maroons athlete with a fan.	87,934	A link to QRL website with an article announcing the Queensland Maroons Squad.	46,755
A link to a QRL website article regarding a Queensland Maroons athlete's injury.	83,810	A photo post encouraging Facebook users to update their profile picture with the official Queensland Maroons frame.	44,483
A highlights video of a retired Queensland Maroons player's career history.	75,219	A photo of Queensland Maroons athletes after winning a State of Origin game.	33,718

It is interesting to note that the highest engaging content types were not generally related to the outcome of a game, but rather providing fans the opportunity to gain a glimpse of the team's personality. There were no live video posts featured in the top ten overall posts in 2018 and one live video post in 2017 which showcased the team inside the changing room after winning the State of Origin series. Like results in section 6.1, there is a noticeable decrease in engagement between research periods 2017 and 2018. Pegoraro (2013) states that when a fan's favourite team won, they spent almost twice as much time following up using SM than they did when their team lost. Although it is difficult to conclude the reasoning behind the decrease, it may be attributed to the Facebook Algorithm, on-field results or content posted.

From a theoretical perspective, this research offers a unique opportunity to advance the research of BIRGing and CORFing effects on social media that have been previously discussed within sporting events in real world environments. This indicated reach and engagement were all significantly higher on social media when the Queensland Maroons team were successful rather than when they were unsuccessful. Tables 6.2, 6.4 and 6.5 reflect a contrast in overall reach and engagement across the 2017 and 2018 results. Although as mentioned above it is difficult to conclude the reasoning for this contrast, it may be hypothesised that even in teams as well-established as the Queensland Maroons, there are many 'soft' fans whose support is dependent on the results. This finding has implications for SMM as if a team is losing, they need to craft content to retain support and ensure fans don't CORF but rather BIRF. This is consistent with Pegarao (2013) who suggests that sport fans in the digital era use various SM platforms to engage in traditional offline fan behaviour, including BIRGing, and CORFing. The results from this study echo Herrera, Valerio and Rodríguez-Aceves, 2018, who found digital engagement is related to the final score. Fans are more likely to use SM to connect with other fans following a win and comparatively may

distance themselves following a loss. Consequently, this fan behaviour may result in reduced SM reach and engagement.

In comparison to research by Billings, Devlin and Brown (2016); and Fan, Billings, Zhu, and Yu (2019) who did not observe CORFing on SM when a team lost (USA and England National soccer teams), it was suggested fan expectations were not high enough to warrant disappointment or disassociation. However, after the Queensland Maroons 'dynasty' it may be suggested that fan expectations were high after experiencing success for a long period of time and fans may associate the Queensland Maroons with winning. Therefore, fans may have CORFed in 2018 and not have used SM to engage with content as they had previously in 2017. Furthermore, as suggested by Fan, et al, (2019), "winning tends to increase fan identification levels, and fans tend to strengthen their association with a successful team" (p.19) and therefore this may account for higher levels of reach and engagement in 2017. This was notable in this research as in 2017, the overall engagement across the top ten posts is calculated at $n = 1,433,779$, however, in 2018 the same figure $n = 799, 750$. This shows a decrease in engagement across the two seasons which may suggest results impact a fans' digital engagement, depending on whether games resulted in victories, ties or losses.

When viewing videos on the Queensland Maroons Facebook page, users are viewing live video posts ($n = 4$) for shorter periods of time than video posts ($n = 9$). Although Facebook suggests that users are watching live video three times longer than native video, (Kant & Xu, 2016) this does not appear to be the case. Due to the nature of live video, as it is happening in the moment, live video has a sense of unpredictability that may either entice viewers to keep watching as anything may happen at any moment or may mean users are tuning out due to being disengaged. These are important metrics for a SM manager as they provide the average minutes that users are viewing live video posts, which can allow for content to be customised

in length to maximise engagement. As video content is unique in comparison to other post types, the remainder of the engagement section will focus on views which are unique to video and live video posts.

Through the 2017 research period, on average video posts ($n = 140,599$) were viewed more than live video posts ($n = 54,584$). However, in 2018 these views dropped to 58,550 for video posts and 81,255 for live video posts. This outcome is not surprising due to the decrease in reach and engagement across the research periods. Although it is interesting that in 2018, views on live video were higher than video posts considering QRL only used live video for the purpose of press conferences.

The type of content that was published across the two types of post may be a factor for the average duration of live video posts throughout the research period. In 2017, average live video posts were broadcast for 7:31 minutes, and in 2018 an average of 11:04 minutes. Press conferences often have a lot of 'down time' and are not focused on engagement for fans, but rather an athlete, coach or manager answering questions from the media. Although videos were broadcast for longer periods of time in 2018, Facebook users seemed to be 'disengaged' as viewing time was 3 minutes in 2018 (27.3% of total live video length) compared to 5 minutes (71.4% of total live video length). This may suggest that fans are not engaged with watching press conferences in live format, and implementing live video for other forms of content (such as behind the scenes, questions and answers etc.) encourages users to watch for longer periods of time due to a sense of immersion, immediacy, interaction, and sociality (Haimson & Tang, 2017).

If Facebook users are not engaged with content, such as only viewing live video posts for 23% of their duration, they may not identify with the sport organisation and be unable to form a lasting relationship with the organisation (Bhattacharya, Rao, & Glynn, 1995; Kwon & Armstrong, 2006).

Academic scholars suggest that the most effective content encourages engagement, discussion, and conversation (Heinonen, 2011; Walsh, et al, 2013). I suggest that Facebook Live posts do not encourage more engagement than other post types, but they do encourage discussion and conversation. However, although live video posts are not the most engaging post type, the type of content featured in a live post is an important engagement influence. Agrawal, et al. (2018) suggested that posts that are focused on long-term engagement should feature athletes displaying a release of tension, solidarity and a visual display of emotion to build a relationship with a fan. Facebook Live may be an opportunity for sport organisations to facilitate building relationships with fans by connecting them with athletes and organisational staff to see their personalities and human sides by providing an authentic experience.

6.2.1   Content Authenticity

Authenticity was a theme that emerged when examining Facebook Live content across the research period. Syrdal and Briggs (2018) state that "consumers find content more engaging when they perceive it to be more authentic, fresh and relevant, rather than syndicated content created to be sold to, and distributed by, multiple brands and organisations" (p. 18). In comparison to other types of Facebook posts, live video posts are unedited and allow Facebook users to have a view of what is happening in real time, in a raw and authentic manner. While not all content would be enhanced by the authenticity and intimacy that a live

stream provides, Bilton (2016) suggests live video "makes a lot of sense for sports because athletes always seem to be so inaccessible to fans, and this makes them feel less so. There's something special about getting that unfiltered, authentic look at these stars" (para. 6). QRL was able to achieve authenticity and intimacy throughout the 2017 State of Origin season by allowing further access to the Queensland Maroons athletes in areas that were previously inaccessible to fans. The unfiltered nature of live video allowed fans to feel connected to their favourite athlete and team through a unique experience that other types of posts may have been unable to convey.

Although the Queensland Maroons only used Facebook Live for the purpose of press conferences throughout the 2018 State of Origin series, it provided Facebook users with an unedited account of events. While other media outlets had access to these press conferences, they may have been intertwined within news articles, or answers edited to potentially be out of context with the questions asked by the media. Through providing a live stream of press conferences the Queensland Maroons were able to offer fans genuine information, and authenticity is able to originate from the fact there is no time to alter or modify content as authenticity "encapsulates what is genuine, real, and/or true" (Beverland & Farrelly, 2010, p. 839).

Leggio (2011) mentions that the battle for social media authenticity is about showcasing the human side of business to make an audience truly feel a part of the brand. The Queensland Maroons were able to achieve this throughout the 2017 season by allowing fans to enter the changing rooms after the television broadcast had ended to join in the celebration of winning the State of Origin series. While this same content was provided in 2018, it was a video post and did not receive the same level of engagement. The concept of live streaming allowed fans

to celebrate in real time alongside the Queensland Maroons, and feel part of the team. The live feature also provided content that was unique and raw, and allowed fans to see Queensland Maroons players as 'real people' (Kowalczyk & Pounders, 2016). For example, in the live video, the Queensland Maroons captain Cameron Smith can be seen drinking beers and having a joke with another teammate, which may have been edited out of a native video post. Social networking with athletes can result in 'ethical baggage' and it may be suggested there is a social impact of the use of live streaming on social media where the level of unpredictability may provide ethical consequences for managers to consider. Whilst there are numerous blogs suggesting organisations focus on creating content that is true to your brand's mission and goals, the unpredictability element can often cause an ethical dilemma for sport organisations.

For example, when QRL posted a live video 'in the sheds 'following the 2017 series win, Langer (Alfie Langer), took his shirt off and "sunk" a beer, which resulted in the post going viral on the Queensland Maroons Facebook page and the fan comments noted a sense of celebration towards this act. However, Langer has a documented history of long-term alcohol related issues, including drink driving charges and taking his clothes off in public (Bentley & Lutton, 2010, April 11), which may pertain a negative sporting culture issue that the QRL should consider as part of the portrayal of the Queensland Maroons / QRL brand. There is a risk for sport organisations with the unpredictability of live streaming that may influence SM strategy related to the kind of culture they cultivate in the team and what sort of public role models they represent. In this case, in Australia alcohol advertising is restricted on television to times that are outside young people viewing hours, but through Facebook Live, the content contained a de factor endorsement – including a visible brand name and mention multiple times in the comments for an alcohol product that is able to be viewed at any time. This issue

was not discussed in either interview with the QRL Digital Media staff, however it is an important concept to consider when understanding the ethical consequences of live streaming.

With that being said, it is important to understand how culture is portrayed through immediacy of live video as these types of posts may provoke a sense of inclusion for fans to be part of the team's culture. Through the live video posts, fans were able to connect with the Queensland Maroons to understand what the team was doing in 'real time' and it may be suggested that behind-the-scenes content is a way to show an organisation's culture and connect with a SM audience to provoke a sense of authenticity (Leggio, 2011). In the 2017 State of Origin season, the Queensland Maroons Facebook page provided their audience with live video posts that featured training sessions, fan days, team walks, players arriving at the stadium for game days, and in the shed post-game celebrations. These types of live videos showed the culture of the team and allowed fans to have a different level of access to the team that may have not been available previously.

Caldwell (2017) believes that SM creates a sense of virtual closeness and is authentic as the seemingly direct nature of athlete to fan contact is not filtered through traditional journalistic practices. Facebook Live may also provide a higher sense of virtual closeness than other types of posts as often photos and videos posts are curated or scripted and are just a glimpse of the athlete rather than providing the 'full picture'. Authenticity may be a concept that affects relationship quality as sport organisations that provide and showcase authenticity may lead to enhanced feelings of trust and loyalty among fans. Through using Facebook Live, sport organisations may be able to implement a RM approach that is focused on developing meaningful and beneficial relationships that are proactive, interactive and enduring (Kim &

Trail, 2011). Furthermore, fans may feel more connected to the sport organisation, team or athlete through the immersive experience that live video portrays.

As SM is continuously evolving, sport organisations need to develop a new mindset to create and maintain relationships with fans. Academic scholars have previously reported that popular content for engagement is focused on showcasing athletes as 'real people', providing details about the athletes and providing a glimpse into their personal lives (Achen, Lebel & Clavio, 2017; Geurin-Eagleman & Burch, 2016). Facebook Live may provide a platform for sport organisations to showcase this type of content by providing an authentic experience for fans to learn more about their favourite athletes and sport teams. Furthermore, a sense of authenticity through this type of content may motivate fan to athlete interaction and in turn influence that relationship.

Facebook Live allows fans to comment at any time during a broadcast using Facebook reactions and comments to engage with the presenter while also watching how other viewers are reacting. As live videos are 'live' they may be more personal than other types of content and provide opportunities to showcase personalities which may not be able to be conveyed in other post types. For example, Sandlin and Peña (2014) suggest that perceptions of authenticity may happen on SM through internalisation. Internalisation may occur when an individual makes sense of SM content by shifting from an external perspective such as describing the organisation, to an internal perspective such as identifying with the organisation. Facebook users may be able to watch live video and engage in a virtual 'camaraderie' moment with the Queensland Maroons athletes who are in their natural state during interviews rather than in specially-produced native video snippets of interviews.

6.3   FAN RESPONSES

Through gaining an understanding of how fans are interacting with SM, sport organisations can create customised content that may in turn enforce brand awareness, reach a higher level of fans, and encourage higher levels of engagement (Eagleman et al, 2009; Eagleman, 2013). This research identified that Facebook Live posts have a higher amount of comments than other post types (photos, videos, links) and therefore may provide an opportunity for the organisation to develop a greater understanding of their audience which is important in the context of RM. As Fichet et al. (2016) note, interactions between live video viewers and broadcasters allow the audience to participate as events unfold. This may create a 'community' feel where other people see comments appearing throughout the broadcast as a reaction to the visual content and feel compelled to add to the conversation alongside other members of the community. The sense of 'real time' gives immediacy to the post which other types of posts may not be able to offer.

This research identifies that the type of content influences the engagement with a Facebook post and therefore it is suggested that engaging fans through live video posts, organisations must understand how fans are responding to these posts. Furthermore, the type of content used by a sport organisation through a live video post may influence how fans respond. Sport organisations that have an understanding of how fans interact with live video posts can capitalise on this understanding by creating theme-based content and better-targeted opportunities for interactions that are purposeful, which make posts more manageable and encourage engagement. Table 6.5 provides a summary of the breakdown of fan responses across the Queensland Maroons Facebook page during the data collection period (May 22nd to July 10th, 2017 and May 27th - July 13th, 2018).

Table 6.5   *Fans' Live Video Comments by Theme (2017 and 2018)*

Comment Response Type	2017	2018	Average	Rank
Support	**7,824**	**1,802**	**4,813**	1
Identification	*2,363*	*462*	*1,413*	
Encouragement	*5,461*	*1,300*	*3,381*	
Rallying	*-*	*40*	*40*	
Camaraderie	**3,809**	**965**	**2,387**	2
Fan Interaction	*2,280*	*496*	*1,338*	
Broadcaster Interaction	*989*	*469*	*729*	
Esteem	**2,516**	**550**	**1,533**	3
Praise	2,330	349	1.340	
Insults	186	201	194	
Passion	**2,234**	**787**	**1,551**	4
Excitement/Joy/Frustration	*1,320*	*589*	*955*	
Admiration	*914*	*198*	*556*	
Expertise	**810**	**574**	**692**	5
Analysis	*590*	*246*	*418*	
Prediction	*220*	*328*	*274*	
Help	**280**	**130**	**205**	6
Seeking Knowledge	*144*	*73*	*109*	
Providing Assistance	*136*	*57*	*97*	
Unable to Code *(single letters, non-words or blank comments)*	**2,351**	**3,319**	**2.835**	
Total Comments	**19,824**	**7,162**	**13,493**	

The most common fan response across both collection periods was support. Support-based comments were focused on sending encouragement to the team or players, and fans identifying themselves as a Queensland Maroons supporter. The use of live video posts in the lead up to State of Origin matches may have contributed to the way fans were responding to these live videos. All live video posts were used pre-game (except for one outlier which was

the team celebration after the 2017 series win). This may have shaped responses by allowing fans to send messages of encouragement to the team and identifying themselves as a 'die hard' Queensland Maroons fan. If these live video posts had been displayed post-Origin, the types of responses may have differed and may have been focused higher on esteem and expertise.

State of Origin is about representation. State against state, they say. Mate against mate. Fans follow the team and identify as being part of their imagined 'Queensland Maroons' community. Fans use live video posts to identify themselves as Queensland Maroons fans, using short statements such as the traditional war cry to prove their identity, (e.g. *QUEENSLANDER*!), and show an emotional and intense attachment to the team. This finding was similar to research by Stavros et al. (2013) who suggest fans seek a forum to state one's identity with the team in one-off emotive proclamations. "Fans welcome an opportunity through SM to express their connect to the team in a short, sharp burst of emotion" (Stavros et al., 2013, p. 8).

Dietz-Uhler and Lanter (2008) argue that the effects of sports fan identification on effective responses suggests that sport plays a powerful role in the emotional reactions of sport fans, especially those who identify most strongly. Furthermore, Stevens and Rosenberger (2012) state that fan identification, following sport, and involvement positively influence fan loyalty. Throughout the research period, the on-field results from each collection period differed, with the Queensland Maroons being 'successful' and winning the 2017 State of Origin series, and 'unsuccessful' in 2018 after losing the first two games to NSW. These results shaped the way fans responded to live video posts. As Queensland Maroons fans have been described as highly identified, they showed loyalty towards their team and used these live video posts to

rally against other 'fans' and encourage them to support their team. Rather than showing CORFing behaviours, they did not insult or distance themselves from the Queensland Maroons team when they were less successful, but rather used the comments to encourage others to stop being negative and support the team no matter the results. Often these comments reflected on the 'building' period that the team was going through following the loss of key players, and referred to the successful history of the team. This type of behaviour is a common coping strategy when fans deal with a loss, as shared despair and joy can be so intensely felt that both emotions leave fans identifying strongly with the team they support (Newson, 2017).

The type of content used by QRL influenced the support responses as throughout the 2017 State of Origin season, content was focused on using a live video post to show behind-the-scenes content of the Queensland Maroons in the lead up to Origin. Williams and Chinn (2016) suggest real-time access to team information is provided by both personnel and athletes from a variety of behind-the-scenes locations and allows fans to feel increasingly connected to their favourite teams. This type of content may enhance the value and fan satisfaction by creating a sense of 'real-time connections' allowing fans to send messages of encouragement in the lead up to Origin (e.g. the team arriving at Suncorp Stadium on their team bus). It may not have the same effect if it was provided through other post types (e.g. photo post) as it may not have a dynamic nature allowing fans an exclusive perspective or access that live video can provide. It may further be suggested that although QRL or the players/team did not reply to any of these comments, an exclusive perspective may allow for comments of support as fans feel they have a 'direct line' to the team as they are viewing them in real-time, rather than a video post that may have been filmed, edited and then uploaded and no longer 'in the moment'.

In comparison, throughout the 2018 State of Origin season, QRL used live video posts for the sole purpose of press conferences. This type of post encouraged fans to respond with expertise comments more than other post types. These comments were often in response to team selections or announcements with fans wanting to offer their opinions; or as other fans referred to these commenters, as 'armchair coaches'.

Live video combines a visual component and chat component on the one screen, allowing users to view content and react in real-time. As fans are viewing the video component of the live video post, the concept of 'real-time' comments popping up on the screen with other fans offering their opinion on the footage that is being viewed may encourage other fans to respond with their opinion. Haimson and Tang (2017) found that viewer interactions encouraged other viewers to interact with the live streams. This current research suggests that through fans sharing their expertise-related responses, it may influence the engagement of live video posts as it provides sociality and interactivity where fans are able to come together to share their opinions on selections and create conversations with other fans regarding the shared experience of a live video. This shared experience may create a sense of community that may be linked to Anderson's 'imagined communities', where a sense of community commonly referred to as citizenship "is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (Anderson 2006) Facebook Live may allow fans to post their own thoughts and experiences on content posted by the Queensland Maroons and consequently create a much stronger sense of community, encouraging other users to interact, comment, share and engage (Hays, Page & Buhalis, 2013).

Although, Stavros, et al (2014) suggest that "social media differ from previous vehicles for marketing communication by allowing customers to communicate directly and easily with each other and to co-create value with an imagined community at a time, place and frequency that best suit the individual fan" (p. 458). This may not be the case for Facebook Live as often the timing of these videos are not a time, place, and frequency that best suit the individual fan due to the real-time construct of live streaming.

The nature of the 'liveness' of a live video post may mean users miss vital information if the content is focused on an announcement or press conference. While other types of posts such as behind-the-scenes content are 'in the moment' and allow fans to view a moment in time (similar to television show *Big Brother*), press conferences and announcements have short snippets of vital information and if a viewer enters the video post late they may miss out on the crucial piece of information shared by the team. This may encourage users to interact with the post by seeking help from other fans to share the information. Furthermore, these types of posts may no longer be engaging for users as the important information has been shared. Users may then look elsewhere for the information in another form such as a news article, rather than waiting on a reply from another user or seeking the moment throughout the stream. QRL did not reply to any of these questions, however other fans replied through comments and provided answers for fans, creating a sense of community.

Similar to research from Kassing and Sanderson (2010) who suggested that Twitter has a capacity "to function as a medium for athletes to offer commentary and opinion and as a mechanism for fostering immediacy with fans through interactivity and insider perspectives"

(p. 124), live video posts provide an opportunity for sport organisations and athletes to interact with fans in real-time.

6.3.1   Encouraging Fan Interaction

A new sub-category was identified in this study as 'broadcaster interaction'. This type of response was for the purpose of the fan directly addressing the broadcaster and awaiting a response. However there was no response from QRL or Queensland Maroons athletes/coaches and this may be a missed opportunity to increase the relationship between the fan and the team. Although some of these responses were a simple 'hello' from the fan to the organisation/athlete/team, the Queensland Maroons could have responded to some fans by personally talking to them or offering opportunities for fans to ask questions of their favourite athlete. The use of press conference content in live video posts may not have allowed for this type of engagement and therefore may have been a missed opportunity by QRL to boost engagement through Facebook Live and maintain and develop the relationship with their fans. This was a challenge identified by Haimson and Tang (2017) who suggest "live streamed event experiences suffer when remote audiences do not feel acknowledged by streamers, or when event performers or broadcasters cannot tell whether their audience is engaged" (p. 50). Furthermore "interactivity is a key difference between event content that is broadcast live in real time, and content that is made available afterwards. Interactive live streams make viewers feel, as one interview participant put it, like 'you actually have a say and you feel like you have a voice that could be heard'" (Haimson & Tang, 2017, p. 50). Therefore, although Queensland Maroons fans were offering expertise, support, and broadcaster interaction through live video posts, the management of Facebook Live may be improved by QRL.

6.4 FACEBOOK LIVE MANAGERIAL PERSPECTIVES

QRL have used Facebook Live on their Queensland Maroons Facebook page since Facebook Live introduced the new tool in 2016 and are one of the only Australian Rugby League organisations utilising live video posts through Facebook to share access to their fans outside of streaming games. During the 2017 State of Origin season, live video posts made up 18% of their total content. In comparison, during the 2018 State of Origin season, live video posts made up 5% of total content posted. Throughout the 2017 season, QRL used Facebook Live to showcase behind-the-scenes content of the team in the lead up, during, and post moments of the Queensland Maroons State of Origin series. However in 2018, QRL used Facebook Live for press conferences only which may explain the reduction of live video posts. Furthermore, the Queensland Maroons lost the State of Origin series in 2018 which may also reflect the change in live streaming content. A qualitative semi-structured interview took place with the overall SM manager from QRL who administers the Queensland Maroons Facebook brand page at the end of the 2017 season, and a SM staff member at the end of the 2018 season to understand QRL's perspective of the characteristics and challenges with using Facebook Live.

6.4.1 Content Relevancy

In 2017, QRL utilised Facebook Live to 'open the door to fans' by allowing fans behind-the-scenes access, however this was not the case in 2018 where they focused solely on press conferences. In 2017, the SM manager believed the 'Celebrate in true Queensland style' live video post was the most successful live video post as it provided an opportunity for fans to celebrate the 2017 State of Origin series win alongside the team. It did this by providing fans the opportunity to have exclusive access into the changing room to celebrate in real-time after the television broadcast had ended. In comparison, in 2018, QRL created a video post in the

changing rooms featuring similar content after the Queensland Maroons won State of Origin, Game 3. This was posted as a native video rather than a live video post and was not deemed as engaging as the live video post in 2017 (in terms of engagement and reach measured throughout this study). When QRL allowed fans to enter the changing rooms alongside the Queensland Maroons through a live video post, it was one of the highest overall performing posts during the research collection period. The post satisfied all four dimensions that make live streams engaging as identified by Haimson and Tang (2017): immersion, immediacy, interaction and sociality. There was also a sense of virtual camaraderie which may reinforce and create mutual trust and relationships between the sport organisation and fans.

The Queensland Maroons created a sense of 'being there' through Facebook Live in the changing rooms following the team's State of Origin series victory. Through Facebook Live the experience was immersive, as the energy and excitement of the Queensland Maroons came through the video where fans were able to see and hear an excited and energetic team celebrating their victory (Haimson & Tang, 2017). A Facebook user commented on this live video stating '*So glad we can be in the shed with the boys and WOW! This is a pretty amazing insight into the origin of the team*!!' This quote not only shows the excitement of the fan being able to have this authentic insight into the team, but also allows the sport organisation to understand what type of content fans enjoy viewing in live video format (which is important for content strategy).

Facebook Live may provide fans a level of immersion that is not available through a one-dimensional television broadcast or video post. They offer opportunities for fans to actively engage with content, participate in real time conversations, have conversations with their favourite athletes/sport organisations, talk to other fans, – all on the same screen. It is the

shared opportunity to interact on Facebook that makes Facebook Live distinct from any other 'broadcast'. QRL were able to use Facebook Live to provide an immersive opportunity for fans to come together and celebrate not only with the team, but also alongside other fans. If QRL had used this content as a native video post, it would require editing, packaging up and posting later, and therefore may not provide an immersive experience as it was not in the moment. It would also not allow the fans to come together and experience a shared moment in time, and that immersion would have encouraged more interaction. The Queensland Maroons fans were able to gain a privileged viewpoint, as previously when television viewing ended, the access ended for fans. However a live video post opens the access further for fans and allows them to be part of the experience even when the television broadcast has ended. Through using a live video post, Queensland Maroons fans were able to experience the victory alongside the team through an immersive experience, where as Haimson and Tang (2017) suggest, "fans are able to have the feeling of being there" (p. 53).

As Facebook Live is opening up access, fans can see what their favourite team is doing in the moment and gives them the opportunity to engage in BIRGing behaviours alongside the team and share the victory. Facebook Live video is also engaging when it provides content that is exclusive and cannot be found elsewhere. It gives the viewer the sense that they are there as the event unfolds and its 'raw footage' (this does not mean poor quality, but rather footage that has not been edited, or scripted), creates a sense of what really happened rather than edited productions put together by media companies. As live video is exclusive to the Facebook page as the creator, fans can go directly to the sport organisation for an 'unfiltered' experience of the event. Facebook Live can be unpredictable and viewers of the broadcast often do not know what will happen next. This may be risky for some sport organisations as it may open up the possibility of something being shown occurring in the moment, that is not

positive for the organisation (as in the case of NFL player Antonio Brown who used Facebook Live to feature his coach's speech in the dressing room, negatively addressing the opposition). Furthermore, Stewart and Littau (2016) believe live video is susceptible to these violations due to a lack of an editorial pause, as live video has no lag between information collection and information distribution.

Sport organisations who are implementing live video into their strategy should have a staff member moderate and monitor the video while it is being broadcast to ensure control. However, the unpredictability of live video may be a key concept of engagement for fans through creating a sense of FOMO (fear of missing out) and may make a sport organisation appear authentic, real and personable. Unpredictability may encourage fans to view for longer periods of time, due to not knowing what may unfold during the live broadcast, revealing the sport organisation/athlete/team's authentic reactions. In the case of the 'Celebrate in true Queensland style' video, a key feature was when the assistant coach was shirtless and swinging his shirt around his head, 'sinking back' a beer, with the players cheering him on and dancing to the team song. This was exciting for fans and is not something the broadcaster had planned; it was in the moment and proved engaging for viewers. The comment '*Alfie Langer just took his shirt off and downed a XXXX gold in the rooms. Peak Queensland*' was left on the post, which may suggest that fans align what they see behind the scenes with how they view and perceive the team. This is an important ethical consideration for sport organisations to consider and suggests there is an element of risk when there is an aspect of unpredictability through live streaming.

In comparison, in 2017 the press conferences were the lowest live video posts in relation to reach and engagement as they did not satisfy the four dimensions identified by Haimson and

Tang (2017). The SM manager believed their fans were not engaged and would change their strategy in 2018 to no longer use live video for press conferences and move their focus to providing higher end production live streams on their Facebook page by creating unique and exclusive content. They stated that '*it is the nature of media now. Fans are more interested in consuming content, rather than watching boring content.*' However, in 2018, the Queensland Maroons shifted from providing fans with behind-the-scenes content and instead only used Facebook Live for the purpose of press conferences. While the SM manager had a preference for using Facebook Live to provide fans with behind-the-scenes content, he believed there was an issue with getting access to players who are overloaded with existing media commitments, and also the narrow window of the State of Origin season.

The SM manager believed that the nature of Facebook Live is good for press conferences as it can provide fans with information as it happens in real time and although it is not exclusive information, it is unfiltered and raw. While all media outlets have access to press conference content, it is often packaged up and edited and can be viewed as 'unauthentic'. These live events proved to be less engaging for fans in 2018 than throughout the 2017 season. However, QRL did not change their approach throughout the series, which may suggest they are not employing a RM principle of listening to fans and using their feedback or insights to tailor their content. As this type of content was not engaging fans, it would be assumed that it would not be included in future strategies, however in the 2019 State of Origin series, QRL continued to only use live video for press conferences with low engagement in comparison to other posts. QRL may be able to make press conferences in live video format more engaging if fans were able to control the questions or have a sense of interactivity and ownership of the press conferences that were exclusively hosted by Queensland Maroons press rather than external Australian press.

Haimson and Tang (2017) believe that interactivity is key in remote event viewing experiences. In comparison to native video viewing which is often a passive experience, live video allows viewers to interact with broadcasters and other viewers, similar to the interaction of attending an event. The SM manager believes that Facebook Live video content is reactive and has more room for people to be vocal. Although the Queensland Maroons did not interact with their viewers directly, stating that '*it's difficult to* (reply to fan comments) *because of the scale… You know there is a thousand people and two people get their question answered, it pisses off 998 people*,' the live video posts were interactive. This finding is consistent with Fichet, et al. (2016) who found that interactions between live stream viewers and broadcasters importantly allow the audience to participate as they unfold. However, Fichet et al. (2016) stated that although there is the possibility of real-time interaction between the broadcaster and the viewers, there was no influence on the stream or replies from the broadcaster to the viewers. Live video may increase interaction by encouraging users to comment, even if it is largely one-way, as users are commenting on live video posts more than any other post type. Throughout all the live videos in the research period, viewers were able to use the live stream to interact with the team as if they were personally congratulating them for their success. Even though the Queensland Maroons may not read their comments, live streams are in real time and make fans feel like they have a voice that could be heard. Although, it may be the case their voice was not heard due to the lack of influence in the live video, or lack of replies, however there were no negative comments addressed to QRL due to lack of response.

Live video can be social even without the viewer interacting or engaging directly with the live stream. Although viewers may not know one another in the live stream, broadcasts create impromptu short-term groups (Hamilton, Garretson, & Kerne, 2014; Hamilton, et al, 2016)

where fans could share their viewing experience with others adding to the sociality of the live stream. Furthermore, live streams are often motivated by emotional proximity (Huang, Starbird, Orand, Stanek, & Pederson, 2015). Responses on the Facebook Live streams illustrate that in the case of the Queensland Maroons Facebook page, viewers were able to form an emotional connection to the team through a sentimental shared experience, creating a sense of personal connection to the team:

'I'm going to enjoy telling this story in 10, 20, 30 years from now! Sheer will power from every QLD player well-earned and enjoy those XXXX's, I will be having one to celebrate also!'

A key characteristic of Facebook Live is understanding how fans are engaging and what type of content best fits within the live video format. The SM manager suggested that while some organisations use Facebook Live to 'go live 24/7' it can detract from the value of a live stream. QRL believes that live video posts are used within reason and not 'overused' to ensure that the concept of 'live' is still exciting for viewers. However, this research identifies that press conferences is not 'exciting' for viewers and are not engaged by this form of live video post in comparison to behind-the-scenes content. The type of content that is pushed through Facebook Live is a key characteristic of an engaging live stream. It has been identified that not all Facebook Live videos are engaging, and content should be focused on providing fans with opportunities to celebrate the success and history of the team and players, and giving insights into the team as 'real people'.

Abeza et al. (2019) identified seven opportunities that SM presented in meeting RM goals to facilitate the building, maintenance and enhancement of relationships between sport

organisations and fans: team centred (knowledge of fans, feeling the pulse, brand humanisation, ongoing dialogue) and fan centred (fan nations, content delivery, and customer service). Facebook Live may be able to meet these RM goals when sport organisations understand what type of content is able to meet these opportunities. Although QRL often used native video to post engaging content, there are opportunities for QRL to extend their reach and engagement by using Facebook Live. The characteristics of live video posts (immersion, immediacy, interaction and sociality) may assist fans in developing a form of virtual camaraderie. It is suggested that the meeting of all four characteristics may be unique to live video posts and may not be achieved through utilising other types of posts (photo, video and link). Through creating content that meet these characteristics, sport organisations may be able to deliver the RM goals identified by Abeza et al (2019) and in return, build, maintain and enhance relationships between the sport organisation and their fans. An example of engaging content in live video format may include posts that allow fans to ask questions directly to the team and have the opportunity for their questions to be acknowledged and answered personally.

6.4.2   Resourcing

A Socialbakers report suggests that although Facebook Live made its debut in 2016, marketers have struggled to make Facebook Live part of their SM strategy (Julian, 2018). The Queensland Maroons Facebook page first utilised Facebook Live in 2016 when the feature was made available, and in 2017 live video content was at 18% of total content, however this dropped to 5% in 2018. This may suggest that QRL were quick to implement Facebook Live, but have struggled to understand how to best implement the feature into their strategy.

In 2017, the SM manager reported that while they have included live video in their SM strategy in the past two years, they don't focus on specifically creating live posts, rather asking the question '*how can we tell our brand story and where does it best fit?'* A brand story is focused on providing a cohesive narrative that encompasses both facts and feelings created by a brand. Wenzl (2019) explains that "brand storytelling on SM influences customers by increasing brand awareness, reach and attracting new followers. A brand story is how an organisation will be remembered by their customers" (para.1). When an organisation is successful in using SM to convey their brand story, it will clearly convey the core brand values and offer customers an experience surrounding those values/Furthermore, the brand story will assist in building a personality and associated emotion to create a personal connection with the fan. The Queensland Maroons used Facebook Live to build their brand story throughout the 2017 State of Origin series. They were able to showcase their organisation and allow a sense of virtual camaraderie with fans, thus developing a connection with the team through behind-the-scenes content that was not previously accessible in other content forms.

However, in 2018, although the press conference live video posts were used as part of QRL's brand story and evoked an emotional reaction from fans, it was often with a negative connotation and frustration directed towards the Queensland Maroons. It may be suggested that these negative connotations were not part of QRL's core values and that live video posts in this instance were unable to successfully create a positive brand story on behalf of QRL. Furthermore, these negative emotions experienced by fans may have had an impact on the relationship between QRL and the fans with the live posts creating negative brand association. As the press conferences are in real time and information is exclusive, first hand fans do not have an opportunity to 'digest' this information, and if it does not align with how

they perceive the brand's 'value', they may quickly react via negative comments and distance themselves from the team or engage in CORFing-related behaviours and actions (Mudrick, Miller, & Atkin, 2016).

Another challenge identified by QRL was in relation to the technology and resources associated with Facebook Live. Although Facebook Live use the tagline 'go live with the camera in your pocket', technical challenges detract from both broadcasters' and viewers' live stream experiences (Haimson & Tang, 2017). QRL reported in 2017 that they utilise a Diji Osmo and push their videos to Facebook Live, which takes some planning to set up and is not spur of the moment. This is contradictory to the SM's statement noting live video was not part of the strategic marketing plan and is spur of the moment when there is an opportunity to go live *'if it is something the fans would want to see'*. This may emphasise that QRL struggles to understand how Facebook Live fits within their current strategy.

Furthermore, in 2018 QRL utilised a Teradek that is put through a specialised video camera, attached to a computer, which is then used to generate a stream key to push through Facebook Live. The SM manager believes that there is less room for error than using a phone, it provides a better quality of audio and allows comments to be monitored through the software. In comparison to the 2017 season, due to the complex set up, Facebook Live video posts were often planned rather than being 'spur of the moment'. Therefore, this may be a reason for a decrease in live video content across the research collection period, as they believe they will only use live video posts that are high quality and add value to the fan (although there were no comments on the live posts that noted the quality of the live videos were of importance). This feedback is further echoed by Telescope (2017) that "90% of online viewers think that video quality is the most important aspect of Facebook Live

videos" (para. 2). While the Queensland Maroons have the capability to set up high productions to produce professional live video, other organisations may find this a barrier to utilise live streaming. Furthermore, this research may suggest that results from 2018 are contradictory to statements made in 2017 and are counter to what one would expect through a specifically- crafted SMM strategy. It may be suggested that sport organisations may have a lack of understanding of live streaming capabilities and the potential value proposition of including live streaming. On the other hand, it may be suggested that sport organisations may be well informed of the capabilities of live streaming but are also acutely aware of the risks associated with the inclusion of live video within a SMM. Therefore, although SMM strategy may include live streaming, there may be a sense of sport organisations having a limited understanding of what they are doing or why they are including live streaming.

6.5 ENHANCING FAN ENGAGEMENT

This research highlights that in this particular case, overall organic reach and engagement is not influenced by the post type, but rather the content. Furthermore, QRL indicated that they implement SMM with a focus on engaging fans and using their platforms to tell a story. It is important for sport organisations to understand how Facebook Live can fit within their SMM, and rather than focusing on what type of post to use on a SM platform, focus should be on quality fan engagement; participation of fans, sentiments, relationships/rapport, trust and community (Aaty & Koshy, 2015). Fan engagement through SM is an interactive process based on sharing personal experience, influencing others, interacting with content created by the team through their SM platform, and fans' co-creating behaviours may aid to promote positive fan engagement (Santos et al. 2019).

The results of this current study indicated that comments on live video posts, on average, were higher than any other type of post. Although Facebook (2019c) suggests broadcasters boost engagement through live video by creating conversation, answering questions and acknowledging their viewers, QRL did not respond to any of these comments either through comment replies or interactions on the live video. However, by analysing the fan responses on live video, they are using these comments for fan-to-fan communication. The fan-to-fan relationship was identified as a component of fan engagement through SM, and Johnson et al. (2013) indicated that when fans identify with a team, their relationship with other fans tends to lead to a sense of responsibility towards these fans. This point was apparent in the live video posts with fans asking the community questions regarding the team or sharing their expertise with the community and responding with other opinions via comment replies. The fan-to-fan relationship through SM may be associated with reciprocal interactions and increase their engagement with teams online (Thompson et al., 2016). Santos et al. (2019)

suggest that accordingly, sport organisations should focus on creating specific content through their SM platforms to create social bonds between fans and allowing mutual support which is fundamental for a continued relationship with a team (Hedlund, 2014). This interactivity may provide a sense of belonging and help shape self-identity and consequently boost fan engagement (Habibi, Laroche, & Richard, 2014).

Santos et al. (2019) suggest sport organisations should use existing features of SM to leverage entertainment and information opportunities for fan engagement. These opportunities may include sharing real-time information, showing behind-the-scenes content, team announcements or squad line-ups. This type of content was consistent with results from this research which suggests when sport organisations use live streaming for the purpose of showing behind-the-scenes content, organic reach and engagement is higher than with other types of content. Furthermore, providing this type of content creates higher fan engagement in the online community.

Although live video posts can be engaging, not all content on live video posts creates higher fan engagement. Pulizzi (2012) suggests that although organisations have all the opportunities to develop valuable and compelling content, the biggest challenge is creating engaging content. Therefore, through understanding how fans are engaging with live video, sport organisations can understand how to incorporate Facebook Live into their SM strategy. While organisations can implement diverse live video content within their SM strategy, the type of content provided may influence the level of engagement. Through developing a scale of fan engagement through live streaming, it is suggested sport organisations should focus efforts on creating behind-the-scenes content, questions and answers, and breaking news for higher levels of fan engagement. Comparatively, the inclusion of events, interviews and press

conferences may receive lower levels of fan engagement as they do not provide key characteristics of engagement (immersion, interaction, immediacy and sociality) and this type of content may be better suited to a different post type such as native video.

Furthermore, the current research indicated that the type of responses varied across content posted through live video posts. For example, fans were more likely to respond to press conferences with expertise to share their opinion on team selections, which in turn increased interactivity and continued conversation with other fans. This type of content may contribute to enhancing fans' interaction and knowledge of the team (Filo et al., 2015). However, in comparison, behind-the-scenes content encouraged comments focused on support, with fans using the live video posts to send messages of congratulations or wishing the team luck with upcoming matches through a sense of immediacy. These types of posts did not create the same level of interactivity with fans, but they did provide a sense of interactivity with the sport organisation (even though in this case it was one-sided). Ahn et al. (2014) suggest that through providing these opportunities, sport managers may positively influence fans' opinions about the SM platform and increase their levels of engagement.

6.5.1   Fan Engagement through Live Streaming - A Conceptual Model

As a result, the following conceptual model is proposed: 'Fan Engagement through Live Streaming' (Figure 6.1). The model provides seven categories of live video content (behind the scenes, questions and answers, breaking news, live shows, events, interviews and press conferences) and provides a scale of fan engagement (ranging from high to low). As the research indicates that fan engagement through live video content differs, it is suggested that sport organisations need to have an understanding of how fans are engaged with SM to be able to create and plan engaging live content that best meets their fans individual needs and

in return boosts fan engagement. This research indicated that not all content is best suited to live video posts and therefore for QRL to enhance fan engagement, focus should be on providing fans with behind-the-scenes content rather than press conferences. It is suggested that there is a potential opportunity for the QRL to include questions and answers and breaking news content within their existing SM strategy as it was indicated that fans are using live video to interact with the broadcaster. However, there is currently no response from the organisation, athlete or coaches. The proposed scale suggests that providing interactive opportunities for fans through live video may result in a higher level of fan engagement. Furthermore, live video posts that are positioned lower on the scale may have a place within a SMM plan however it is important to understand how fans' are responding to best meet their needs.

This research identified that fans are most likely to interact with live video posts by responding with messages of support and encouragement. Therefore, it is suggested that QRL focuses on providing live video posts that provide fans with behind-the-scenes views and make this a focus of its strategic SM plan to positively influence fan engagement. This type of live video post is consistent with the most engaging live streaming content during the collection period, providing fans behind-the-scenes access to the dressing room post-series win, offering access that they are unable to get elsewhere, and making them feel like they are an integral part of the team.

Figure 6.1   Fan Engagement through Live Streaming: A conceptual model

Low   **Level of Engagement**   High

Press Conferences	Interviews	Events	Live Show	Breaking News	Questions and Answers	Behind the Scenes
Press conferences are usually organised for the purpose of distributing information to the media and answering questions from reporters. Therefore, Live Streams can be seen to be long and boring with the important information being posted in other types of posts throughout the stream. Often Press Conferences are not exclusive and therefore not as engaging.

Examples: Organised media conference pre/post game, critical incident response | Interviews with sport players, relevant sport staff or on scene fans. Does not encourage engagement as often comments are not read in comparison to Question & Answer. However, may help develop a sense of human traits to the social media profile.

Examples: Interview with captain pre-training session, interview with coach prior to a game. | Events allow sport fans to feel like they are experiencing an event that they are not able to attend themselves. An engaging event broadcast allows the fan to see through the eyes of a spectator from different viewpoints and encourages them to interact as if they were at the event as it happens.

Examples: Fan days, sponsor day. | Sport organisations can go live to broadcast regular sport shows. These shows have a host and include interviews with players, analysis from games, predictions for games. Although not a necessary component, engagement may be increased through opportunities for fan interaction such as interactive polls and answering fan questions

Example: live show streamed weekly similar to a television broadcast. | Sport fans get to hear any breaking news or announcements direct from the sport organisation as soon as it happens. Therefore, creating a higher relationship with the fan with privileged information straight from the source. Sport fans can provide feedback as the information unfolds. Differs to Press Conference as media coverage is exclusive to sport organisation.

Examples: Athlete injury, team naming, new signing of player, addressing critical incident. | Similar to an interview but encourages high engagement where sport fans are able to ask questions directly to the sport brand and have them answered live. This engagement potentially increases a fans relationship with the brand. Can be hard to manage if multiple questions are coming in at once and not everyone gets their questions answered which may result in them feeling devalued.

Examples: Athlete panel, individual athlete taking questions from fans. | Behind the scenes view that allows the fan to see an area they would not usually see through traditional media. Makes the fan feel like they are an integral part of the team.

Examples: Dressing room post game celebration, training session, on the team bus. |

Expertise   Esteem   Passion Support   Passion Interaction   Passion Expertise   Interaction Help   Passion Support

Fan Responses

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSIONS

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

This final chapter draws together the conclusions from the findings to address the overarching aims of the thesis, which were to examine the use of live streaming and how it is utilised within a SMM strategy. In doing so, it addresses the objectives of providing greater context around the use of Facebook Live by understanding how live streaming is utilised within SMM strategy and how Facebook Live affects reach and engagement. This chapter considers the broader contributions of the research before noting future directions for research. It concludes with consideration of some limitations, and the ongoing relevance of this research.

Despite the growing interest in social media in sport, few studies to date have explored live streaming, and Facebook Live. From an academic standpoint, research in this area has only emerged in the past several years (e.g. Raman, Tyson, & Sastry, 2018; Rein & Venturini, 2018; Hamison & Tang, 2017; Tang, Venolia, Inkpen, Parker, Gruen, & Pelton, 2017). Moreover, there has been no research to date on the use of live video posts in relation to sport organisations and how these types of posts perform in comparison to other posts and how they may impact fan engagement. Through this thesis, I address some of the gaps in this area of research by attempting to answer the following research questions, in the case of the Queensland Maroons;

1. Did Facebook 'live video' posts generate a higher level of engagement than other types of Facebook posts?

2. Did Facebook 'live video' posts generate a higher level of reach than other types of Facebook posts?

3. How did fans respond to Facebook 'live video' posts?

4. What were QRL's perspectives on the managerial implications of Facebook Live?

5. What impact did live streaming have on fan engagement?

The research was a case study of the Queensland Maroons, a state representative team that plays in the State of Origin competition (a three-game series against NSW, annually competed over a three-month period). To answer my proposed research questions, data were collected from the Queensland Maroons Facebook fan page utilising Socialbakers, and Facebook Insights. Comments across all live video posts throughout the collection period were downloaded and individually analysed for concurrent themes, and two semi-structured qualitative interviews with QRL SM managers, in 2017 and 2018, were respectively undertaken. The data analysis has used a triangulation method, combining all results to consider and provide answers to the thesis research questions within the context of RM, SMM and specifically, fan engagement.

7.1 REACH

I indicate that live video posts do not generate higher organic reach than other types of posts (photo, video and links). In 2017, QRL staff suggested that a successful post should reach over 4 million people, however this figure has dropped to 100,000. The change in numeric success was described in relation to the Facebook algorithm, which QRL believes has made content posted on a fan page less viewable through organic reach, and more reliant on paid reach (encouraging sport organisations to invest money into Facebook, in return to boost their reach). In 2017 though, no posts in the collection period reached 4 million people, however the top ten posts across the collection period all reached over 100,000 people. It may be

suggested that QRL reviews its SM plan and creates more realistic targets rather than attributing the decrease to Facebook's algorithm.

Content relevancy: While live video posts in 2017 were focused on providing fans the opportunity to gain a behind-the-scenes insight into the team, throughout the 2018 season QRL utilised live video for the sole purpose of press conferences. On average, these posts did not generate an organic reach level of 100,000 ($n = 93,230$). QRL stated that if content does not have an organic reach of over 100,000, it would need to review and examine the content to understand why it did not work and how they could better manage their strategic SM plan to encourage fan engagement. Comparatively, throughout the 2017 season, the average reach for live video posts was higher ($n = 178,857$), which may suggest that content plays an important part in influencing fan engagement and consequently organic reach.

I suggest that although live video posts do not generate higher reach than other Facebook posts, the type of content appears to influence the level of reach. Sport organisations that have an understanding of fans' motives to engage with content by understanding how they are responding to posts such as through support or encouragement-based comment can influence the level of fan engagement by providing fans with specific content based on their desired interactions. I propose that providing fans with behind-the- scenes and exclusive content through live video, fans will interact at higher rates with this content therefore boosting the organic reach of the post and allowing an increase of audience to engage with the post (and potentially develop a relationship with the organisation).

7.2   ENGAGEMENT

I indicate that as a sum of overall engagement (reactions, comments and shares), live video posts do not generate higher levels of engagement than other types of posts (photo, video and links). However, the type of engagement is influenced by post type: photo posts generate the most reactions, video posts generate the most shares and live video posts generate the most comments.

Content authenticity: I suggest that the focus of engagement should be on comments for the following reasons: (1) potential to influence organic reach, (2) as a vehicle for fan-to-fan interaction and fan-to-sport organisation interaction, (3) considered by Facebook to be a form of 'meaningful interaction' in terms of providing back and forth discussion and therefore influencing the Facebook algorithm. Furthermore, comments show a higher level of engagement than other types of engagement as they take more time to engage through crafting and writing a comment in comparison to clicking a reaction and therefore show a deeper level of commitment from the fan to the sport organisation. Comments may also show how a fan is responding to the data, as sport organisations can read how fans are feeling towards content rather than a reaction or share. Such interactions therefore also provide a more meaningful feedback mechanism for the organisation.

Live video posts may encourage more comments than other types of post due to the sense of immediacy. While viewing the visual component of the live video, fans can use the comment function to interact with other fans in 'real-time', interact based on a shared viewing experience, and develop a collective consumptive community built around the organisation. Fans may see other fans comment and therefore this may encourage further engagement in response to other comments popping up in an overlay of the video component. The

interactivity component of live video may provide a sense of belonging to the community and consequently boost fan engagement (Habibi, Laroche, & Richard, 2014), while ultimately also helping to develop more meaningful and long-lasting relationships.

With this in mind, sport organisations may focus on utilising live video within a strategic SM plan that encourages comments. This research highlighted fans were more likely to comment on behind-the-scenes content through sending messages of encouragement and support to the team. QRL reported that from a fan's point of view, engagement is reactive, and through using live video posts to showcase team announcements there is more room for people to be vocal and frustrated about the content in real time. This was evident in the press conference videos with fans responding to press conferences to offer analysis and predictions on the team to show their level of expertise.

Consequently, QRL believes that no matter the on-field results, content should provide an authentic relationship with a range of fans who display passion and pride for the athletes who represent their favourite team. Live video posts have this opportunity to increase fan engagement and feel more connected by providing opportunities to show case athletes as 'real people', providing glimpses into their traditions, and offering a vehicle for being vocal with other fans and the sport organisation. Through providing specific content focused on this mindset, sport organisations may develop live video opportunities to encourage engagement (reactions, shares, comments) of fans to interact with their favourite sport team and athletes.

7.3 FAN RESPONSES

In 2017, QRL believed it focused on creating and maintaining relationships with fans by using live video posts as a RM tool rather than utilising the tool to sell products such as tickets, memberships, merchandise. However, in 2018 they changed their approach, and stated they were not looking for a personal outlook and more of a business focused on competitions. These varying approaches did not appear to change the way fans were responding to live video posts and the type of responses across live video was typically consistent throughout both research periods.

Encouraging fan interaction: As previously mentioned, I identified that live video posts have a higher amount of comments than other post types (photos, videos links) and therefore may provide an opportunity for sport organisations to develop a greater understanding of their audience which is important in the context of RM. The type of content used on a SM page may influence how a fan responds to live video posts. Sport organisations can capitalise on this understanding of specific responses by creating theme-based content and better-targeted opportunities for interactions that are purposeful, which may encourage engagement.

I identified that the most common responses to live video posts were support, camaraderie and expertise. A new response was identified in the form of 'rallying'. Because of the 2018 season's results and the use of press conferences for live video, fans were responding to these live videos with expertise responses that were often negative in sentiment. QRL understood that these types of posts were more likely to gain a negative reaction and mentioned they would use other types of content such as player highlights identifying nostalgic memories for fans of when times were 'good' to encourage positive fan engagement.

However, although these responses were seen as negative, it encouraged other fans to respond and try to influence these fans to stop the negative comments and rally support for the team. These highly-identified fans used live video posts as a vehicle for fan-to-fan interaction and encouraged a community feel to gather support for the team, consequently influencing fan engagement.

Furthermore, the type of content used by QRL influenced fan engagement, and the use of live video posts in comparison to other types of posts that could have been used to post the same type of content may have also influenced the responses. It is important for sport organisations to understand how content used in live video posts may influence response, and how it may fit within their strategic social media plan. For example, the sense of real-time connections encouraged fans to respond with messages of encouragement as they saw their team arrive in 'real-time' on the bus at Suncorp stadium. If another type of post had been used for this content, it may have not gathered the same level of support due to no longer being in the 'moment'.

7.4   MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

Sport organisations may not understand the implications of live video or how to use live video posts within their SM strategy for the purpose of fan engagement. It was suggested that some organisations may go live 'for the sake of going live' without understanding the potential purpose of this type of post. This research identified three unique management challenges of live video posts for sport organisations: (1) access to athletes, (2) live-streaming resourcing, and (3) understanding and determining 'engaging' live stream content.

Access to athletes: QRL identified that it wanted to include live video posts for the purpose of providing fans with an insight into Origin camp. However, they believed access to athletes was a barrier to provide this type of content in terms of asking them too much, given their current commitments. They believed they did not want to add to an already high-demand media workload of athletes which may suggest that QRL does not prioritise or view the importance of this type of media in comparison to other media commitments. Furthermore, QRL indicated that it does not include live video posts within its SM plan and use live posts sporadically as it sees fit. Comments on live video posts suggested fans interact with athletes through live video posts as if they are talking directly to the athlete, even when there is no response from the athlete. Through providing content that encourages conversations or opportunities to ask questions of their favourite athletes, sport organisations may be able to use live video posts to increase fan involvement, strengthen associations and allow closer connections to the team. If sport organisations have an understanding of the implications live video may have towards fan engagement and how content may influence and shape fan interactions, they may be more willing to plan and include these types of posts within their SM strategy. Furthermore, sport organisations may be more willing to manage athlete

commitments more strategically so there are opportunities for athletes to take part in live stream initiatives.

Live streaming resourcing: Facebook advertises its live video feature with the tagline 'go live with the camera in your pocket', and this appears to be a somewhat simplistic notion. QRL believes live video requires external equipment to provide fans with a high-quality stream, as technical challenges detract from both broadcasters' and viewers' live stream experiences. QRL indicated they used a Diji Osmo, a Teradek and external live stream software to push the live video through Facebook's API to provide a high quality visual and audio experience for fans. There are now specific companies that provide equipment and staff for organisations to ensure a high-quality live video is produced. This may suggest that live video must be planned and cannot be spur of the moment due to the complex set up required. Furthermore, the costs and time associated with these resources may be a barrier for some organisations to provide live video through their SM platform.

Understanding and determining 'engaging' live streams: I suggest that QRL appears to have no real rationale or perceived perception about what is exciting for viewers. Live video posts should facilitate the building, maintenance and enhancement of relationships between sport organisations and fans through the following concepts: team-centred (knowledge of fans, feeling the pulse, brand humanisation, ongoing dialogue) and fan-centred (fan nations, content delivery, and customer service). There are opportunities for sport organisations to extend their reach and engagement through live video posts that meet the following characteristics: immersion, immediacy, interaction and sociality, and create immersive experiences that allow fans to develop a form of virtual camaraderie. These characteristics may not be possible through other types of posts. Through creating content that meets these

characteristics, sport organisations may be able to deliver the RM goals and in return, build, maintain and enhance relationships between the sport organisation and their fans.

When the television broadcast ends (or is yet to begin), live video posts allow fans to have further access into team customs and traditions that were previously not accessible for fans, and rather than controlled by media, it is being broadcast authentically and directly from the organisation. For example, an immersive experience allows the energy and excitement of the sport team to come through the video in real time, where fans are able to see and hear an excited and energetic team celebrating a victory. Fans may feel compelled to add to the live conversation to support and praise the team, and feel engaged through the sense of 'being there' and belonging, alongside the team through a virtual experience. Furthermore, it was discovered that engagement may be influenced by the success of the team. It was noted that there was a contrast in reach and engagement across the 2017 and 2018 results which lowered levels of reach and engagement when the Queensland Maroons were unsuccessful on the field in 2018. It may be suggested that fans displayed CORFing behaviours in 2018 and were less likely to engage with content following a loss. This is important for SM managers as if a team is losing, they may need to craft content to display a positive message and retain support. If SM managers are able to understand their fans and use engaging content within SM strategy, they may be able to shift fans from CORFing to BIRFing behaviours and retain support and fan engagement through a loss. I identified seven different types of live video content, and consequently a theoretical model evolved from this finding to aid sport organisations in creating live video content based on an understanding of how fans may interact and respond to these types of posts. The following section provides an explanation of the conceptual model and how this may be used for sport organisations to understand impact of live video posts on fan engagement.

7.5   ENHANCING FAN ENGAGEMENT

This study illustrates that live video posts can positively impact fan engagement for sport organisations. Through providing live video posts with the following characteristics: immersion, immediacy, interaction and sociality, sport organisations have the opportunity to provide positive fan experiences that can transform into meaningful relationships. Importantly, the findings illustrate that not all live video posts are engaging, rather the content shared can shape and influence fan interaction and engagement. Sport organisations that seek fan engagement opportunities and long-term relationships (fan-to-fan and sport organisation-to-fan) must ensure content is specific, based on how fans respond to content such as provide opportunities for support, provide an opinion or broadcaster interaction.

Conceptual model: Sport organisations may utilise the conceptual model, 'Fan Engagement through Live Streaming' (see Figure 6.1) to assist with developing a SM strategy that is focused on using live video posts for the purpose of fan engagement. If sport organisations are able to engage fans through live video, there may be opportunities to garner a deeper relationship with current fans, reach new fans through organic reach and increase fan satisfaction. In return, highly engaged fans may generate income, have a high sense of BIRGing and low CORFing, and positively influence other fans through word of mouth through SM activity. Furthermore, the proposed model provides engagement and suggests that content influences the level of fan engagement. The research indicated that behind-the-scenes content was most likely to engage fans, and press conferences provided a comparatively lower level of engagement. While a variety of content is important to include within a SM strategy, sport organisations should understand the scale, and focus on providing opportunities for higher levels of engagement to enhance their relationships with fans.

7.6   FUTURE RESEARCH

On reflection on my research, there are several learnings that may be applied in future research. When this research was first proposed in 2016, Facebook Live was in the infancy stage and little was published examining the use of live streaming within social media (either peer-reviewed journals, or online articles). Personally, I knew little about live streaming and as the thesis evolved, my personal knowledge and contribution to this emerging area of research quickly expanded. This resulted in a variety of learnings in the methodology areas that would be undertaken in a different way if this research was to be replicated.

Firstly, the semi-structured interviews were a challenge as they required a base level of knowledge, and if further understanding of live streaming on social media platforms was understood, it may have constructed different questions and provided a deeper analysis of managerial implications. It is hope that this research provides that base for future research, coupled with the growing use of live streaming that people have first-hand experience using these platforms which will help guide questions with a deeper understanding.

Secondly, it would have been useful to implement a variety of interviews with QRL across various staff members, and at various times in the season to note changing points of views throughout the implementation of live streaming. However, as indicated in my methodology section, it would have been useful to interview the same personnel throughout the research project rather than have two perspectives split across two seasons. Whilst the two perspectives brought a different level of understanding to this research, it would have been useful to have both of these perspectives across both seasons. In the future, it would be suggested to schedule follow up interviews with the same staff member rather than changing of personnel.

Third, there are a number of emerging issues that provide a base for future research as my research provided several interesting results, from which potential future research opportunities have been identified. Broadly, the body of knowledge of live video would be significantly improved with further scholarly inquiry in this area, especially in the area of sport management. Future research may be undertaken in the following areas:

Testing the conceptual model: This research identified a conceptual model 'Fan Engagement through Live Streaming'. Future research may test this model and provide insight into other categories of live video that may emerge, and various levels of engagement and responses that may transfer from other sport organisations. The transferability of this model may be tested in other organisations outside of sport to understand how live streaming engagement varies across industries. A suggestion for further research may be implementing each of these post types within a specific SMM strategy in a longitudinal study through a measure of engagement and analysis of fan responses to test understanding of this model. Furthermore, research may use this model and apply the theoretical themes to existing organisations using live video within their SMM strategy to measure levels of engagement and verify the themes of live video, which correspond with levels of engagement.

Fan Responses: As I noted in the methods section, this research did not provide an analysis of a fans perspective of live streaming which is an area that needs further investigation. Whilst this research used comments to categorise how fans were responding to live video posts, future research may utilise focus groups, interviews or surveys to provide a deeper understanding into how fans perceive live video posts from a sport organisation. Furthermore, an experimental design may be used to compare native video to live video and aim to understand what the differences are in fans perceptions towards these various types of

content. In line with this, further knowledge is needed to understand specifically what fans deem as 'engaging' through live video posts.

Sentiment: This research did not examine sentiment of posts; however, a deeper analysis of Facebook comments and content may be a direction for future research to understand how users are engaging with live video posts. Using the auto code feature in NVivo 11, comments can be categorised into positive or negative sentiments. This approach may be useful when examining game outcomes, and how fans respond to live video posts based on the result. For example, how does the outcome of a game influence live video post responses? Research may use the same type of live video content (i.e. behind the scenes in the changing room following a game) where the team has either lost, won or drawn, and aim to understand how the outcome of the game influences the response with a sentiment analysis.

Risk Management: This research indicated that the level of unpredictability and authenticity may create a level of risk for sport organisations and their brand. Further research may examine SM managers perspectives through a collection of interviews across various sectors (i.e. professional, non-for-profit, etc.) to gain an understanding on a managerial perspective of live streaming risk and if this is a barrier to implement live video within SMM, or how it is managed. Furthermore, it may be beneficial to juxtapose this research with a fans' perspective (i.e. through survey collection or focus groups) to understand if 'riskier' videos lead to increased engagement perspectives and levels. A critical analysis may be implemented through a content analysis to deem what is 'risk' in relation to live streaming and what are the implications for a sport organisation's or athlete's use of live streaming?

Other sport organisations: As this research was a case study, further research should focus on a wider range of sport organisations. Furthermore, research may examine professional sport organisations that operate on a yearly schedule (rather than the short window that State of Origin provides) and how live video posts impact fan engagement. This opportunity may involve a comparative study that replicates this methodology across a wider range of sport organisations (i.e. professional and non-for-profit etc.) and various countries to further explore this phenomenon. Gaining a larger sample size from which to obtain data may create more validity within the area of live video. The current research used a sport organisation that is based in Australia, and therefore future research may include organisations outside of Australia to compare how other regions are using live video platforms.

Further content: While this research focused on live video from the perspective of an organisational viewpoint, further research may examine live video posts in terms of providing sporting content such as streaming a full game. Research may look to understand how live video posts affect fan engagement for sports that are classified as 'niche' and receive no television funding, and how the opportunities for live video have opened up their fan base and opportunities to view this sport where they were previously unavailable. Examples sports are touch or lawn bowls that generally do not receive television coverage but are utilising live streaming on social media to increase their visibility. These findings may indicate areas for further research in these areas that were not identified through examining from a professional organisation's viewpoint.

Platforms: As this research was a case study on Facebook Live, further research should be undertaken on comparing other SM platforms offering live video such as Instagram and Twitter. Through implementing a content analysis of live video posts across the same time

period, research may look to understand how fans engage with these posts and compare levels of reach and engagement across the platforms and if content or fan engagement differs on various platforms. A question may be posed, is fan engagement on live video content specific or is it generic across all SM platforms?

Content: This study compared post types to gain an understanding of reach and engagement and how live video impacts fan engagement. Future studies may use content types to understand how content influences reach and engagement. It would be useful to further understand how fan behaviour is influenced by results. While this research briefly examined this perspective, it would be beneficial to understand how on-field results may have a direct impact on levels of reach and engagement across SM platforms. This impact of game outcome is not unique to live streaming, however a semi-structured interview may be organised at the start of a season, mid-way through a season and the end of a season with a variety of SM managers to understand how their perspectives and content strategy may change with the on-field results. QRL believed their SMM is not influenced by on-field results, although the results of this research indicated otherwise.

Authenticity: This research identified that live video posts provide a sense of authenticity as videos are unedited and provided in real time. However, future research would need to be carried out to understand how fans view the raw aspect of live video and whether these types of live video posts provide a sense of authenticity. This approach may be implemented through fan focus groups, or surveys to gain an understanding on a fans' perspective of authenticity. Furthermore, research may look to define what this notion of 'authenticity' is within the context of SM, particularly, live streaming.

I suggest the 'future of live' creates a platform for research on live streaming in an area that is currently under-examined. For example, whilst sport organisations may offer media training for athletes, there are further implications for the use of athletes on social media live video, which may require further training for sport organisations and for athletes to understand the implications of "liveness". Furthermore, as athletes become their own brand, they now have more control of their SM platforms, and the ability to go live, which may raise a number of ethical issues on how the sport organisation or athlete is portrayed. These ethical considerations are critical for future research and implications for sport organisations.

7.7   LIMITATIONS AND ONGOING RELEVANCE OF THE RESEARCH

As with all research this thesis has its caveats. This study is limited to the sport of rugby league, State of Origin and the Queensland Maroons. The aim of this research is not to generalise from the sample provided to a larger population, but rather provide insight about the phenomena of SM live video and how sport organisations may use live video to influence fan engagement. Generalisations beyond the Queensland Maroons and Facebook Live may be limited. That said, the findings from my research may provide a foundation and framework for future research to explore live video posts at a deeper level. It is acknowledged that in conducting research in the SM setting that is constantly evolving, there is a risk of research being outdated. However, although there have been challenges with live video on SM, it is constantly changing and evolving in response to these changes and it appears to be here to stay with reports that 82% of consumers prefer live video from a brand to other types of posts (Golum, 2019). Consequently, there is a need for continued and ongoing research in this field for sport organisations to understand how to combat these changes and challenges and adapt to strategically incorporate live video into their social media strategy.

7.8   CONCLUDING STATEMENT

In summary, it is apparent that live video posts have an impact on sport organisations' SM strategy and fan engagement. As fans are finding it hard to 'switch' off from SM through mobile devices, there is always an opportunity to be connected to fans at any time of any day. SM has changed the expectations of fans who want to be involved in a sport team's traditions and rituals, and live videos provide the opportunity for this type of access when television broadcasts have not started or have finished. This research suggests sport organisations should provide more behind-the-scenes content and fans may love the immersive energy that these types of videos convey, providing a sense of being there alongside the team and creating a sense of belonging. Live video provides sport organisations with a new level of fan access by opening the door for conversations and interactions in real time by allowing fans to ask questions and have them answered by their favourite athletes or key organisational personnel immediately.

As the Queensland Maroons won the State of Origin in 2017, the QRL invited fans into the changing rooms to celebrate the victory alongside the team. When the television broadcast ended, fans were looking to SM to celebrate and engage in BIRGing behaviour alongside other fans. While traditional posts such as photos may allow fans to see the team celebrating and leave congratulatory comments, a live video post provided an authentic experience allowing fans to continue viewing their team in action, feel the excitement of the win, interact with other fans watching the same video and send praise and support to the team in real time. Live video is changing the SM landscape and sport organisations must have a grasp on the consumption of these videos and how they may impact fan engagement to reap the benefits.

7.9 POSTSCRIPT

The Queensland Maroons went into the 2019 State of Origin season as the 'underdogs'. With the changing of the guard and the loss of the 2018 series, it was suggested that NSW would dominate the Maroons and claim a clean sweep. The Queensland Maroons snatched a victory in the series opener in Brisbane 18-14 and the mood changed. For just the second time in State of Origin history, a game was played outside of Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne with Game 2 being hosted in Perth – it was now anybody's game. NSW proved too strong for QLD in Game 2 and recorded a dominant 38-6 victory. Although Queensland were dominated in Game 2 and suffered a loss, fans' comments on Queensland Maroons SM varied from the 2018 season as it was now tied 1-1, rather than the series being over in Game 2. Rather than using SM to rally support for the team, it was more positive in sentiment as fans were excited and hyping each other up about the upcoming 'decider' as the team headed to Game 3 in Sydney. However, with the game levelled and only minutes to spare, player of the series James Tedesco sealed the victory for NSW.

Similar to the 2018 State of Origin season, QRL used live video for the purpose of press conferences. QRL introduced 'waiting screens', which allowed the video to be 'live' prior to being shown and included a high-quality graphic display on the screen utilising the QRL logo and the words 'media conference' on the live video post as QRL awaited fans to enter the live stream prior to showing the press conference. On a personal level, I found this to be a factor of disengagement.

As a fan of the Queensland Maroons Facebook page, when I received a post notification that the team was live and I clicked into the post and was greeted by a 'waiting screen', I clicked out of the post as there was no indication as to what time the content was being shown and

would rather watch this type of content elsewhere or read highlights in a news article. Comparatively, if it had been a waiting screen to show insight into camp, or an opportunity to ask an athlete a question, I believe I would have been inclined to wait for the stream to start and be engaged with exclusive information.

I have thoroughly enjoyed researching QRL and the Queensland Maroons. I am looking forward to further research emerging in the SM live video space and how this may shape sport organisations' fan engagement strategies going forward.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A   FACEBOOK INSIGHT DATA COLLECTION

Facebook Insight Export	Insight Export Definition	Data Collected
Facebook Insights Data Export	Key page metrics for engagement, like sources and audience details. Insight report is based on overall page performance.	- Lifetime Total Likes Daily New Likes - Daily Unlikes - Weekly Page Engaged Users - 28 Day Page Engaged Users - Daily, Weekly & 28 Day Total Reach - Daily, Weekly & 28 Day Organic Reach - Daily, Weekly & 28 Day Paid Reach - Daily, Weekly & 28 Day Viral Reach - Daily, Weekly & 28 Day Logged-in Page Views - Daily, Weekly & 28 Day Reach of Page Posts - Daily, Weekly & 28 Day Total Impressions of your Posts - Daily, Weekly & 28 Day Organic Impressions of your Posts - Daily, Weekly & 28 Day Paid Impressions of your Posts - Daily, Weekly & 28 Day Viral Impressions of your Posts - Daily, Weekly & 28 Day Total Consumers - Daily, Weekly & 28 Day Page Consumptions - Daily, Weekly & 28 Day Negative Feedback - Daily, Weekly & 28 Day Negative Feedback from Users - Daily, Weekly & 28 Day Total Views - Daily, Weekly & 28 Day Total Promoted Views - Daily, Weekly & 28 Day Total Organic Views - Daily, Weekly & 28 Day Total Promoted Views - Daily, Weekly & 28 Day Total Action Count - Daily, Weekly & 28 Day Total Website Clicks
Facebook Insights Data Export (Post Level)	Key post metrics for reach, impressions and feedback. Insight report is based on individual post performance.	- Post ID Permalink - Post Message - Post Type - Post Date/Time - Lifetime Post Total, Organic and Paid Reach - Lifetime Post Total, Organic and Paid Impressions - Lifetime Engaged Users - Lifetime Post Consumers - Lifetime Post Consumption - Lifetime Negative Feedback - Lifetime Negative Feedback by Users - Lifetime Post Impressions - Lifetime Post Reach by people who like your page - Lifetime Post Paid Impressions - Lifetime Paid Reach of a post by people who like your page - Lifetime people who have liked your page and engaged with your post - Lifetime Organic and Paid views to 95% - Lifetime Organic and Paid Video Views - Lifetime Average time Video viewed

		-	Lifetime Video Length
Facebook Insights Data Export (Video Level)	Key video metrics including views, unique views, paid views and organic views. Insight report is based on specific video post-performance.	- - - - - - - - - - - -	Post ID Permalink Post Message Post Type Post Date/Time Lifetime Post Total Impressions Lifetime Post Total Reach Lifetime Total Video Views Lifetime Unique Video Views Lifetime Total 30-Second Views Lifetime Total Watches at 95% Lifetime Unique watches at 95%

Total Number of Export Files   3

SOCIALBAKERS INSIGHT EXPORTS

Socialbakers Export	Export Definitions	Exports
Queensland Maroons Social Media Overview	Overview and Comparison of Facebook, Instagram and Twitter metrics at the page level for a specific data-range based interactions, reach, growth of fans, and number of posts.	- Twitter Interactions Per 1K Followers - Total Twitter Followers - All Twitter Content by Interactions, Likes, Replies, Retweets - Instagram Interactions per 1K Followers - Total Instagram Followers - All Instagram Content by interactions, likes, comments - Growth of Instagram Followers - Growth of Twitter Followers - Growth of Facebook Followers - Distribution of Instagram Page Post Types - Most Engaging Instagram Post Types - Sum of Facebook Interactions
Queensland Maroons Video Content	Metrics based at the post level filtered on video posts for a specified date range with data captured on Interactions, Reactions, Comments & Shares.	- Created Time - Page Content - Interactions - Reactions - Comments - Shares - Interaction Per 1,000 Fans
Queensland Maroons Photo Content	Metrics based at the post level filtered on photo posts for a specified date range with data captured on Interactions, Reactions, Comments & Shares.	- Created Time - Page Content - Interactions - Reactions - Comments - Shares - Interaction Per 1,000 Fans
Queensland Maroons Link Content	Metrics based at the post level filtered on link posts for a specified date range with data captured on Interactions, Reactions, Comments & Shares.	- Created Time - Page Content - Interactions - Reactions - Comments - Shares - Interaction Per 1,000 Fans
Queensland Maroons Growth and Engagement.	Key metrics based at the page level for a specific date period focusing on engagement and fan growth.	- Distribution of Page Post Types - Growth of Total Fans - Interactions - Most Engaging Post Types - Number of Posts - Number of Posts - Total Fans
Total Number of Export Files	5	