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# SOCIAL MEDIA COVERAGE OF WOMEN'S SPORTS: A CASE STUDY OF NCAA DIVISION I CONFERENCES' FACEBOOK PAGES.

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by

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B.S., Yeungnam University, 2012

M.S., Yeungnam University, 2014

A Research Paper
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Master of Science in Education

Department of Kinesiology
in the Graduate School
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Approved by:

Dr. Taeho Yoh, Chair

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Graduate School
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AN ABSTRACT OF THE RESEARCH PAPER OF

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TITLE:  SOCIAL MEDIA COVERAGE OF WOMEN'S SPORTS: A CASE STUDY OF NCAA DIVISION I CONFERENCES' FACEBOOK PAGES.

MAJOR PROFESSOR:  Dr. Taeho Yoh

Researchers have consistently found that men's sports have received far more coverage than women's sports in various types of media (Adams & Tuggle, 2004; Clavio & Eagleman, 2011; King, 2007). However, there is a lack of studies on the difference of coverage between men's and women's on social media. Thus, the purpose of this study was to investigate the media coverage of men's and women's sports on NCAA Division I conferences' official Facebook pages. 10 NCAA Division I conferences (5 FBS and 5 FCS conferences) were randomly selected and total 7954 photographs posted during the 2016 were collected. A content analysis was employed to analyze the coverage and answer the research questions. The results indicated that there is a significant discrepancy on the social media coverage between men's and women's sports.

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**CHAPTER 1**

**INTRODUCTION**

Title IX, an educational amendment, has motivated girls and women to be interested and participate in sports. Gems and Pfister (2009) stated that prior to the passage of Title IX, girls and women received various gender discriminations in all levels of sport. For example, approximately 15 percent of college athletes were women. Colleges and educational institutions did not support female athletic programs, as much as they did to make athletic programs and they favored male athletic programs by providing new equipment and building new facilities for them (Sage, 1998). However, the passage of Title IX has increased women's participations in sports exponentially. Spaaij (2014) specifically argued that Title IX guaranteed women received equal opportunities to engage in sports, and female athletes were given equal treatments in many aspects of athletics such as practice schedules, financial aids, and sporting equipment, etc.

Even though Title IX has a significant impact on the increase of women's participations and allowed female athletes to have numerous benefits, gender discrimination still exists with other issues, such as politics and racism in sports (LaVoi & Kane, 2014; Delaney & Madigan, 2009). Research attempts to find various gender inequality in sports and explain reasons why they occur Masculinity and femininity, and traditional gender roles have been the most widely used themes to explain existence of gender inequality in sport. For example, Crawley (1998) and Koivula (2001) claimed that masculinity in society categorizes sports based on gender. Furthermore, Koivula (2001) found that people divided sports as women's, men's, and neutral sports based on their

understanding of each sport's risk and aesthetic values. More specifically, Sage (1998) stated that men and women have been conditioned to learn and follow specific gender roles constructed for each sex. People experience and learn gender roles through diverse social institutions and cultural mediums. Such stereotyping and gender roles have greatly influenced gender inequalities in sports. For example, if parents expect their children's behaviors based on their gender, boys should be active and independent, whereas girls should be passive and dependent. Parents believed sports are for boys because sports provide opportunities to develop characteristics associated with masculinity. As a result, girls naturally had less opportunities to participate in sports (Sage, 1998).

Gender ideology and roles negatively influence not only on participation but also the administrative aspect of women in sports. The number of women in sport organizations, including college athletes, professional sport, and international sport organizations, is significantly less than their male counterparts. According to Costa (2003), despite great improvement for female athletes, female athletes and athletic programs still have been discriminated in terms of financial supports like the operating budget, and scholarships. Regarding women's employment, Acosta and Carpenter (2000) argued that few women administrators remain and work for female athletic programs because college athletic departments tend to prefer hiring men over women. Similar to the trend in college athletics, gender discrepancies were discovered at the International Olympic Committee (IOC). Sage (1998) revealed that IOC provided little administrative opportunities to women. In terms of these discriminations because

people believed that sports are for men so that sport organizations should be managed by men.

Examining the content of media coverage has become one of the mainstream agendas in gender discrimination research. Studies have been conducted on gender inequalities in various media formats and contents, such as newspaper (Pedersen, 2002; King, 2007; Mackay & Dallaire, 2009), magazine (Bishop, 2003; Weber & Carini, 2012; Couture, 2016), and TV (Koivula, 1999; Cooky, Messner, & Hextrum, 2013). King (2007) found that although the coverage of female sports, such as articles,and photographs, has tremendously increased over the past decades, the mainstream still lies on the coverage of men's sports. Similarly, Adams and Tuggle (2004) compared the airtime between men's and women's sports on TV programs and found that TV programs have focused more on men's sport than women's sports. Regardless of the format of media, the majority of studies reported that female athletes and women's sports had comparatively less media coverage in the number and sizes of photographs, and the duration of video than those of male athletes and men's sports.

As stated previously, although most research on gender and media coverage has focused on traditional mass media, recent studies focus on the coverage of internet (Kian, Mondello, & Vincent, 2009; Clavio & Eagleman, 2011; Wolter, 2015). For example, Kian et al. (2009) and Clavio and Eagleman (2011) conducted studies on the coverage of women's sports in internet sites and blogs and found that the coverage of female athletes or sports was less than the coverage of male athletes and men's sports. However, these studies examined only internet sites and blogs, there is a lack of research on the coverage of female athletes or sports in social media, especially in

social network sites, which have become one of the most powerful sources for social occasions. The purpose of this research paper was to investigate the coverage of men's and women's sports on NCAA Division I conferences' official Facebook pages. Research questions were created to achieve the purpose of this study. The following questions will guide this study: 'Does the number of sports photographs on Facebook pages differ between men and women sports?', 'Does the number of photographs, including game schedules and news on Facebook pages differ between men's and women's sports?'

In the next chapter, the literature review of social media, social network sites, women and sport, media and women sports will be provided, followed by the methodology. Afterwards, results of the research will be analyzed and explained. Lastly, discussions, implications and conclusions will be presented.

# CHAPTER 2

# LITERATURE REVIEW

Although it is obvious that Title IX has made a great contribution to improve women's participation and engagement in sports, issues in women's sports, such as the lack of opportunities to participate, subordinate or sexual descriptions of female athletes, and the lack of media coverage, still exist in U.S. society. In an effort to understand gender discriminations in media coverage in sport, research has consistently conducted content analyses of the coverage of traditional media such as newspaper, television, and magazine. However, due to the technological boom in media, social media have become a mainstream of mass media. The problem is, however, that most studies focus on traditional media platforms. Societies have been changing very rapidly and social media was created and its growth has been tremendous. In order to understand social media and the coverage of women's sports, an extensive literature review has been completed.

## Women and Sports

It is obvious that sports have tremendous benefits for people and societies. However, sports also have negative social issues. As Delaney and Madigan (2009) stated, sport looks like a small society, so it can reflect both positive and negative aspects of social values and norms. More specifically, LaVoi and Kane (2014) argued that various social areas such as race, gender, and class contribute both positively and negatively to issues in sports. Gender equality has emerged as one of the most important issues in sports and research has paid significant attention to various issues of gender in sports. Various reasons, such as religion, rules of morality, and traditional

gender order, have continuously forced women not to participate in sports from the past (Gems & Pfister, 2009). In this regard, Sage (1998) stated women have been discriminated in diverse social aspects such as work, education, even family because of masculinity. Women have less opportunities to be promoted for positions and teachers and educational administrators have mainly considered boys or male athletes with priority. Additionally, parents expect and encourage their children's activities in accordance with their children's gender. As a result, parents are more likely to suggest passive and dependent activities to their daughters, while they encouraged their sons to participate in active and competitive sport activities (Sage, 1998).

Moreover, research dealing with women's issues attempted to examine not only the participation, but also sexuality or body images (Kane, 1988; Messner, 1988; Crawley, 1998; Jones & Greer, 2011). Coakley (2001) contended that women's opportunities to participate in sports have been negatively influenced by femininity from the past. Femininity has caused girls and women to be very limited in their participation of sports, as fewer sports which are considered less competitive and more beautiful like figure skating, and gymnastics are available. As a result, the rate of female participation in sports in general was low. In regards to body image, Gems and Pfister (2009) stated that one of current gender issues in sports is that women athletes' bodies were generally portrayed as sexual objects. Thus, the success of female athletes' or their teams' success and achievements were seldom portrayed. Female athletes and sports institutions have recognized this problem but, the real problem is that they only consider it as a way to attract public interests and compete with men's sports.

**Title IX**

In 1972, Title IX was enacted to provide more equal participation opportunities to female student-athletes. According to Spaaij (2014), "Title IX requires, among other things, that women be provided with an equitable opportunity to participate in sport and that female athletes receive equal treatment, for example in the provision of equipment and supplies, the scheduling of games and practice times, coaching, practice and competitive facilities, and access to tutoring and scholarships" (P.289). With that regard, Title IX was used for explaining and claiming inequities of women's sports in many types of research. Weber and Carini (2012) argued that Title IX contributed to the increase of women's participation in sports and forced educational institutions supported by federal government to provide equitable opportunities or benefits such as scholarships, equipment for their athletes regardless of gender (LaVoi & Kane, 2014). However, research maintained that women's issues are still existing even though Title IX improved women's rights in sports. For example, Hatery (2010) revealed that male student athletes received more financial supports than female athletes. Moreover, salaries of coaches for male teams were higher than salaries of female teams' coaches. Other expenses showed a similar result (Hatery, 2010). Additionally, Whisenant, Forsyth, and Martin (2014) found that some critics argued that supports or opportunities for male students in sports were diminished because of Title IX.

### Media and Women's sports

Various media formats and content have been utilized for studies to investigate gender inequities. Many studies found that women's sports still have less interests through comparing the number of photographs, where they were taken, and the airtimes on TV (King, 2007; Koivula, 1999; Adams & Tuggle, 2004). In addition, female athletes

were described and represented based on traditional gender roles, not as athletes

(Nam, 2004). Sometimes, the media portrayed women athletes as sexual objects.

**Portrayal of women in sports**

LaVoi and Kane (2014) maintained that the media concentrated on male athletes'

achievements and strength. However, female athletes were commonly portrayed by

features not related to sports such as physical attractiveness. Additionally, Gems and

Pfister (2009) stated that some magazines published women athletes' nude or sexual

photographs for people's interests and prospective sponsors. Through analyzing media

contents, Knapp (2013) found that women's sports were marginalized by men or and

even women. Female athletes were also forced to reveal their femininity and media

focused on female athletes' bodies, not focused on their athletic abilities. Similarly,

Couture (2016) argued that female athletes are still described based on traditional

femininity although there are many efforts and changes for viewing them as athletes.

Nam (2004) stated that the media portrayed female athletes and sports through the

eyes of men. As a result, female athletes were described as passive and to provoke

men's interests.

**Media coverage**

Comparing media coverage between men's and women's sports is one of the

popular ways to find a gap between them. Research examined the difference of media

coverage between both gender's sports and used various media content such as

pictures, videos, commentaries and articles in newspaper, television, magazines, and

blogs.

Recently, Cooky, Messner and Hextrum (2013) examined the coverage of women's sports in local and national broadcast sports news agencies and found that the coverage of women's sports is the lowest ever. The amount of coverage of women's sports and the quality of that coverage illustrates the ways in which the news media build audiences for men's sports while silencing and marginalizing women's sports. Moreover, Adams and Tuggle (2004) found that national TV programs for sports stories mainly covered men's sports and the portion of women's sports was minimal, despite the tremendous increased participation of women in sport at various levels. The difference of the media coverage between men and women sports on traditional media was similar with the difference on social media. Kian, Mondello, and Vincent (2009) investigated contents related to March Madness on sport sites and found that every sports site dealt more with men's basketball than women's basketball. Similarly, Clavio and Eagleman (2011) examined contents posted on 10 sport blogs, one of the formats of social media, and found that women's sports received comparatively less interests than men sports.

A lack of media coverage of women's sport is not a problem only in the United States. King (2007) analyzed Olympic Games' contents in national newspapers to find the gap of media coverage of male and female athletes in the United Kingdom. The results showed that even though the coverage of female athletes has noticeably increased, sports media is still dominated by male athletes ~~or~~ and sports. The lack of media coverage of women's sports was also found in South Korea. Kim and Koh (2004) examined a change of media coverage of women's sports from 1948 to 2003 in South Korea. The research found that the coverage of women's sports was significantly less

than men's sports although the number of pictures of women's sports had been increased during that period (Kim & Koh, 2004).

In addition, studies have been conducted on the media coverage of male and female athlete and sport at the collegiate level. Shifflett and Revelle (1994) examined media coverage of women sports in NCAA news and found that the size and number of pictures and paragraphs of female athletes were less than that of male athletes'. The results revealed that the number of pictures and paragraphs including women's sports were less than men's sports. Likewise, the average content size of women's sports was smaller than that of men's sports. This inequality of media coverage has not changed. Even the positioning of pictures of women's sports were less favorable that of their male counterparts. Also, more pictures of men's sports were printed in color (Pedersen, 2002). Huffman, Tuggle, and Rosengard (2004) concluded with a similar notion that the media still discriminates against women's sport when compared to men's sports in terms of the quantity of coverage. There is no doubt that the participation of women in sports have increased. However, there still exists the discrimination against women's sports today.

**Social media**

Social media is defined as an internet or web-based media platform that allows users to communicate or share their information or news with other people (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Additionally, social media collectively are "Web-based applications that enable people to share content such as information, opinions, and experiences" (Eagleman, Wright, & Green, 2014, P.340). Even though specific the definition of social

media varies slightly by each researcher, the general definition of social media suggested by scholars are mostly similar (Miller et al, 2016; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

Unlike traditional media such as newspaper, and magazine, social media can be accessed through the internet. People use various internet capable devices to access social media platforms (Parsons, 2011). Goff (2013) also argued that increased use of electronic devices like the smart phone enabled the extension of social media because it was accessible. Internet-based social media take on various of forms such as blogs, podcasts, internet forums, and social networking sites (Mangold & Faulds, 2009; Albarran, 2013).

According to Parsons (2011), after social media emerged, the importance of social media in the society has been sharply increasing and the effects of social media is also widespread and powerful. Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy, and Silvestre (2011) also mentioned that social media provides very interactive platforms by using web or mobile technologies in order to discuss, share, and communicate contents created by social media users.

Due to the eminence of social media, research has been conducted in variety of areas, including politics (Shirky, 2011), human behavior (Correa, Hinsley, & Zúñiga, 2010), and education (Kitsantas & Dabbagh, 2011). Social media can be influential in creating companies or organizations' reputations and provide a good opportunity to promote products or services. Moreover, social media has become a primary place to discuss with other people publically (Edosomwan, Prakasan, Kouame, Watson, & Seymour, 2011).

**Social network site**

With the emergence of social media, social networking has become an important part of culture and affected in people's lives. The definition of social network site is "web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection [regularly referred to as SNS-friends], and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system" (Boyd & Ellison, 2007, p.211). Similar to how social media has various platforms, social network sites have several types of platforms. Hampton, Goulet, Rainie, and Purcell (2011) and Miller et al. (2016) mentioned that social network sites include Snapchat, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and other sites. These social network sites provide different services and options depending on the purpose or size of each site (Carter & Levy, 2012). Even though interface or services are different, the functions of social network sites are similar. Moreover, because social network site is one of social media platforms, the characteristics of social network sites are also similar. Social network sites commonly provide multiple functionalities to their members, such as the possibility of chatting, organizing events, or reminding users about their friends' birthdays (Subrahmanyam, Reich, Waechater & Espinoza, 2008; Boyd & Ellison, 2007).

Given the characteristics of social network sites, Hampton et al. (2011) argued that the popularity and impacts in the society have been increasing rapidly. In the field of academia, the analysis of characteristics and structures of social network site has become an important vehicle in the study of social phenomenon. Subrahmanyam et al. (2008) revealed that young adults mainly used social network sites for their online social networks with friends or families. Similarly, Hampton et al. (2011) argued that most

Americans who use the internet are using social network sites and they have more friends because social network sites are used to connect with other people.

Research examined that social network sites were used for sports (Cooper, 2010; Pronschinske, Groza, & Walker, 2012). This is mostly related to sports marketing. Walker, Kent, and Vincent (2010) revealed that social network sites can be used as a marketing strategy for sports teams and companies. In fact, many teams and corporations reduced their expenses by using social network sites. Also, social network sites influenced people's awareness and loyalty to sport teams or corporations (Pronschinske et al., 2012).

**Facebook**

Facebook is one of the most popular social network sites with a great number of users around the world. According to Facebook (2017), the average number of Facebook' users is approximately 1.23 billion and 1.15 billion users connected Facebook by using their mobile devices as of December 2016. The mission of Facebook is "to give people the power to share and make the world more open and connected." (Facebook, 2017). Facebook allows people, organizations and companies to upload their statuses, pictures, video and promote upcoming events (Wallace, Wilson, & Miloch, 2011; Witkemper, Lim, & Waldburger, 2012). Unlike other social network sites such as Snapchat and Twitter, Facebook provides wider options to share users' opinions, images, and videos (Miller et al., 2016).

The various functions of Facebook attracted many different organizations to promote and advertise their products and services. In sport industries, Facebook has been used by sport teams, players, companies and organizations for interacting with

people. Yoon, Wang, and Jeong (2016) argued that many sports teams believed that

Facebook pages can allow them to connect their fans. Therefore, Facebook fan pages

and other online communities have been created. Korzynski and Paniagua (2016)

referred that sports teams or stars' Facebook pages can enrich their fans' experiences.

**CHAPTER 3**

**METHOD**

**Sample**

This research paper was designed to examine the coverage of both men's and women's sports of NCAA Division I (FBS and FCS) conferences through content analysis of their official Facebook pages. The sample was taken from their Facebook pages that interact with their fans and Facebook users. NCAA Division I football has two main divisions: Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS, Division I-A) and Football Championship Subdivision (FCS, Division I-AA). NCAA classified each division's members by estimating how many sports they managed, the sizes of their facilities, and the funding of their athletic department. Universities that have good funding and environment for athletic programs are normally members of the FBS, while comparatively smaller schools participate in the FCS division.

The sample was composed of 10 NCAA Division I conferences' (5 FBS conferences, American Athletic Conference, Big 10 Conference, Big 12 Conference, Conference USA, Mid-American Conference and 5 FCS conferences, Big Sky Conference, Colonial Athletic Association, Ivy league, Ohio Valley Conference, and Southern Conference) official Facebook pages, randomly selected from both FBS and FCS divisions. In terms of contents, although Facebook included videos, writings and other types of contents, this study focused on photographs. The photographs uploaded from 1 January 2016 through 31 December 2016 reviewed and coded during the time period beginning on March 10, 2017 and ending on March 25, 2017.

**Procedure**

Content analysis has consistently been used to investigate media coverage analysis because it is one of unobtrusive research methods to study various social phenomenon without affecting contents (Babbie, 2007). Content analysis is particularly well suited to descriptive and explanatory research (Wigston, 2009). More specifically, Content analysis is a methodology used to analyze various communications and possible materials for a wide array of resources from books, to articles on the internet (Babbie, 2007). In addition, content analysis allows for the analysis of a large amount of data and is flexible for deciding a research period (Wigston, 2009). The general procedures of content analysis were followed to code all contents on conferences' Facebook pages. As Riffe, Lacy, & Fico (2005) recommended, two trained coders (two sport management master's students) conducted coding. The two coders worked independently to review and code each of the 10 conferences' official Facebook pages.

A codebook utilized for this research paper was based on and modified a codebook of Malik (2016)' research. Each coder individually visited each conference's official Facebook page and reviewed photo section. Coders saw all photographs and recorded them for using the codebook. The codebook for photographs was comprised of gender descriptions (men - 1, women - 2, both - 3, not decided - 4), contents in photographs (athleticism - 0, non-athleticism - 1, coaches - 2, other people - 3, schedules and news - 4, others - 5).

The value of Cohen's Kappa is used to explain the intercoder reliability for categories of the codebook. Cohen's Kappa is usually utilized to measure intercoder reliability and is particularly suggested for research with two coders (Landis & Koch, 1977). According to Krippendorff (2004), 0.80 was suggested an acceptable percentage

of agreement. Cohen' Kappa analyses indicated 0.962 (Gender of sports) and 0.927 (Representations of photographs), which were above the standard of substantial agreement.

**CHAPTER 4**

**RESULTS**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the media coverage of men's and women's sports on NCAA Division I conferences' official Facebook pages. As stated in Chapter 2, the media coverage of women's sports has historically been less than the coverage of men's sports regardless of types of media platforms (Pedersen, Whisenant, & Schneider, 2003; Adam & Tuggle, 2004; Clavio & Eagleman, 2011). Even though many studies revealed that women's sports were marginalized in the media, most studies focused on traditional media. Furthermore, although some studies analyzed contents of social media platforms, such as blogs and websites, there is still a lack of research on the content analysis of social media. Therefore, this study was designed to analyze photographs posted on NCAA Division I conferences' Facebook pages.

As mentioned in Chapter 3, this study utilized content analysis design to analyze contents and reveal the answers of research questions. Two trained coders participated in this study and the total of 7954 photographs were investigated. Cohen's Kappa in SPSS 24 was used to measure inter-coder reliability. According to Riffe et al. (2005), the value of Kappa above 0.8 is considered excellent inter-coder reliability. Values of Cohen's Kappa for each data set ranged from 0.962 (Gender of sports) to 0.927 (Representations of Photographs), which indicated significant agreements.

Of the 7954 photographs, 79.5% ($N = 6320$) photographs include images of athletes, team, and coaches, and 14.4% ($N = 1145$) photographs include images of championship schedules, schedules of media day, results of matches, team or athletes' stats, and other sports news related to athletes or teams. Around 6% ($N = 489$)

photographs represent contents not related to sports such as images of sponsors and logos or mascots of conferences' members (Table 1).

Table 1

*Contents of photographs*

|  | Frequency | % |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Sports (athletes, teams, or coaches) | 6320 | 79.5 |
| Game Schedules and Information | 1145 | 14.4 |
| unrelated sports | 489 | 6.1 |
| Total | 7954 | 100.0 |

The first research question was created to find if the number of photographs between men and women athletes, teams, and coaches in sports or relevant sport events differ. Of the 6320 photographs, including athletes, team, and coaches, 53.4% ($N = 3373$) photographs represent men athletes, teams, and coaches while photos for women athletes, teams, and coaches account for 41.1% ($N = 2599$) photographs. In addition, 1.96% ($N = 124$) photographs include both men and women athletes, teams, or coaches. The remaining 3.54% ($N = 224$) photographs were taken from non-sport events, such as graduation ceremony, events for local communities, so they were coded 'not related to gender' even though there were men and women in photographs (Table 2). In order to know the statistical difference between men's and women's sport

photographs, A Chi-square analysis was employed, and the result revealed that there is a significant difference between them ($\chi^2$ (1, N = 5972) = 100.314, p <.05).

Table 2

*Distribution of sports photographs between men's and women's sports*

|  | Frequency | % |
|---|---|---|
| Men's sports | 3373 | 53.4 |
| Women's sports | 2599 | 41.1 |
| Men's and Women's sports | 124 | 2.0 |
| Not decided | 224 | 3.5 |
| Total | 6320 | 100.0 |

The purpose of the second research question is to analyze contents of photographs excluding athletes' or teams' images posted on the conferences' official Facebook pages. Of the 1145 photographs, 58.6% (*N* = 671) photographs include men's sports game schedules, news, and information. On the other hand, 26.2% (*N* = 300) photographs represent women's sports game schedules, news, and information. Around 3% (*N* = 30) images include both men and women's game schedules, and both gender athletes' achievements or stats in the same pictures. In addition, 12.6% (N = 144) photographs were recorded as 'Not decided' because although these photos include information related to sports, the coders could not recognize enough contextual information to decide which gender those photos belong. (Table 3). In order to test the

statistical difference between the coverage of photographs, including sport information, between men's and women's sports, a Chi-square analysis was employed. The result indicated that there is a significant difference between them ($\chi^2$ (1, N =971) = 141.752, p <.05).

Table 3

*Distribution of photographs on information between men's and women's sports*

|  | Frequency | % |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Men's sports | 671 | 58.6 |
| Women's sports | 300 | 26.2 |
| Men's and Women's sports | 30 | 2.6 |
| Not decided | 144 | 12.6 |
| Total | 1145 | 100.0 |

Photographs relevant to sports were also categorized and analyzed by conferences. Of the 7097 photographs, FBS conferences' Facebook pages have 4225 photographs. In detail, 56.7% ($N$ = 2397) photographs of men's sports and 41.3% ($N$ = 1746) photographs of women's sports were posted on FBS conferences' Facebook pages. The remaining 2% (N = 82) photographs included both genders' sports. On the other hand, 57.3% ($N$ = 1647) photographs represent men's sports and 40.2% ($N$ = 1153) photographs portray women's sports in FCS conferences' Facebook pages. Around 2.5% ($N$ = 72) photographs include both genders' sports (Table 4).

Looking at the percentages of photographs between men's and women's sports, men's sports have higher percentages than women's sports. Even though there was a difference about the percentages of media coverage among Division I, FBS and FCS conferences, this difference was less than 2 percent. Regardless of the level of conferences, women's sports have less coverage than men's sports.

Table 4

*Distribution of sports photographs between FBS and FCS conferences*

| FBS | Men's sports | Women's sports | Both genders' sports | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Conferences | 2397 (56.7%) | 1746 (41.3%) | 82 (2%) | 4225 (100%) |
| FCS | Men's sports | Women's sports | Both genders' sports | Total |
| Conferences | 1647 (57.3%) | 1153 (40.2%) | 72 (2.5%) | 2872 (100%) |

**CHAPTER 5**

**DISCUSSION**

This chapter will discuss the finding of this study and provide suggestions for future research. Overall, the findings of the content analysis revealed that the coverage differed between men's sport and women's sport on NCAA Division I conferences' Facebook pages significantly differed.

The first research question asked the difference of the number of photographs of between men's athletes or teams and women's athletes or teams on conferences' official Facebook pages. Studies have historically analyzed the size and number of photographs to compare the media coverage between men's sports and women's sports (Pedersen, 2002; King, 2007; MacKay & Dallaire, 2009). However, this study only investigated the number of photographs because the size of photographs can be changed in accordance with the size of electronic devices. According to the content analysis, of the 7954 photographs, 6320 photographs represent athletes, teams, and coaches. The percentage of the photographs of men's sports and women's sports is 53.4% (N = 3373) and 41.1% (N =2599) respectively. This finding is not surprising because previous studies revealed similar results. Shifflett and Revelle (1994), Pedersen (2002) claimed that the pictures of men's sports were significantly more than the pictures of women's sports. Similarly, campus newspapers and television programs also mainly concentrated on men sports (Huffman, Tuggle, & Rosengard, 2004). Moreover, newspapers published by NCAA also marginalized women's sports through the number or size of paragraphs or photographs and locations of them on newspapers. Although the coverage of women's sports on NCAA newspapers had recently been

increased, the coverage of women's sports was still less than that of men's sports (Cunningham, Sagas, Sartore, Amsden, & Schellhase, 2004). Cunningham et al. (2004) revealed that approximately 50% of photographs represented men or men's teams. At the same time, the percentage of images of women or women's team was 33 %. Considering the finding of this study and comparing this with the results of previous studies, the coverage of women's sport in social media is greater than that of traditional media because of the characteristic of social media in its capability of updateability. However, the coverage for women's sports in social media is still considerably less than men's sports.

For the second research question, this study analyzed information, such as game schedules and special news, provision photographs for both men's and women's sports. A total of 1145 photographs were gathered and analyzed. Of the 1145 photographs, 671 photographs (58.6%) included game schedules and news for men's sports and 300 photographs (26.2%) represented women's sports. Thirty (2.6%) photographs included contents of both men's and women's sports in the same photographs. This finding indicated that conference administrators tend to put more weight on game schedules and news for men's sports at first. As Sage (1998) stated, men still have priorities over women in sports even though there were a lot of efforts to decline gender inequities because of the following reasons: the majority of administrators in sport organizations and teams are men, and more male audience of sports websites than female audience. Consequently, the web administrators of social media focus more on men's sports than women's sports.

As mentioned above, NCAA Division I conferences are classified as FBS or FCS conferences based on diverse standards such as the number of sports, the capacities of their football stadiums, and their financial-aids. In order to find out the difference of media coverage between FBS and FCS conferences, this study investigated the number of sports photographs between FBS and FCS conferences. The results revealed that the total number of photographs was significantly differed between them (FBS conferences – 4225, FCS conferences – 2872). However, the ratio of coverage between men's and women's sports in both FBS and FCS conferences was very similar. Therefore, it can be assumed that men's sports receive more coverages than women's sports regardless of the conferences.

It should be noted that this study is not without its limitations that could be improved in future studies. First, this study only analyzed one major social network site. It is recommended that future research should examine other social network sites, such as Instagram and twitter. Second, this study only examined photographs of the conference Facebooks. It is also recommended for future study to examine other contents, such as video coverages of social websites. Lastly, this study investigated contents of DI conference Facebooks. It would be beneficial for future studies to conduct a content analysis of other divisions' social network sites.

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