

Social Media Audit and Conversation Analysis



Jasmine Arant, Haley Dowell, Kiarash Jalali and Cassie Serra

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## Introduction

Gatorade was created in 1965 with the purpose to replenish the water, electrolytes and carbohydrates athletes lost through physical activity. Throughout the years, Gatorade's main mission has been to strive to find innovative ways to provide enough nutrition and hydration to help improve an athlete's performance. The brand founded The Gatorade Sports Science Institute in 1985 for the purpose of researching ways to enhance nutrition and hydration for athletes with advice and products.<sup>1</sup>

Gatorade is owned by PepsiCo and is a registered trademark of Stokely-Van Camp Inc. The brand generates more than \$1 billion in annual sales. It consistently ranks among the top ten brands of the U.S. Liquid Refreshment Beverage (LRB) and ranks as the number one market leader in the sports drink market. Gatorade's top competitor is Powerade, but also competes with brands such as vitaminwater and Monster Energy. In 2013, Gatorade owned 69.5 percent of the market share of the U.S. sports drink market and Powerade owned only 28.8 percent.

Gatorade is a global brand that is sold in more than 80 countries. In 1984, it was established as the official sports drink of the National Basketball Association. The brand has also been associated with other professional organizations and teams such as Major League Baseball, Major League Soccer and the National Football League.

Although Gatorade continues to take the lead in the sports drink market, its growth has slowed down to 3.7 percent per year in 2013, from 6.2 percent in 2010. In addition, the brand slipped to the sixth largest LRB brand from fifth, being replaced by Nestle Pure Life. Gatorade has been impacted by increased competition from the growing popularity of bottled water and ready-to-drink tea, coffee and energy drinks. The brand also suffers from a change in consumer attitude toward the sports drink market due to the high calorie and sugar level content of its products. Luckily for Gatorade, the soda market is falling, making Gatorade PepsiCo's most important brand and market to focus on.<sup>2</sup>

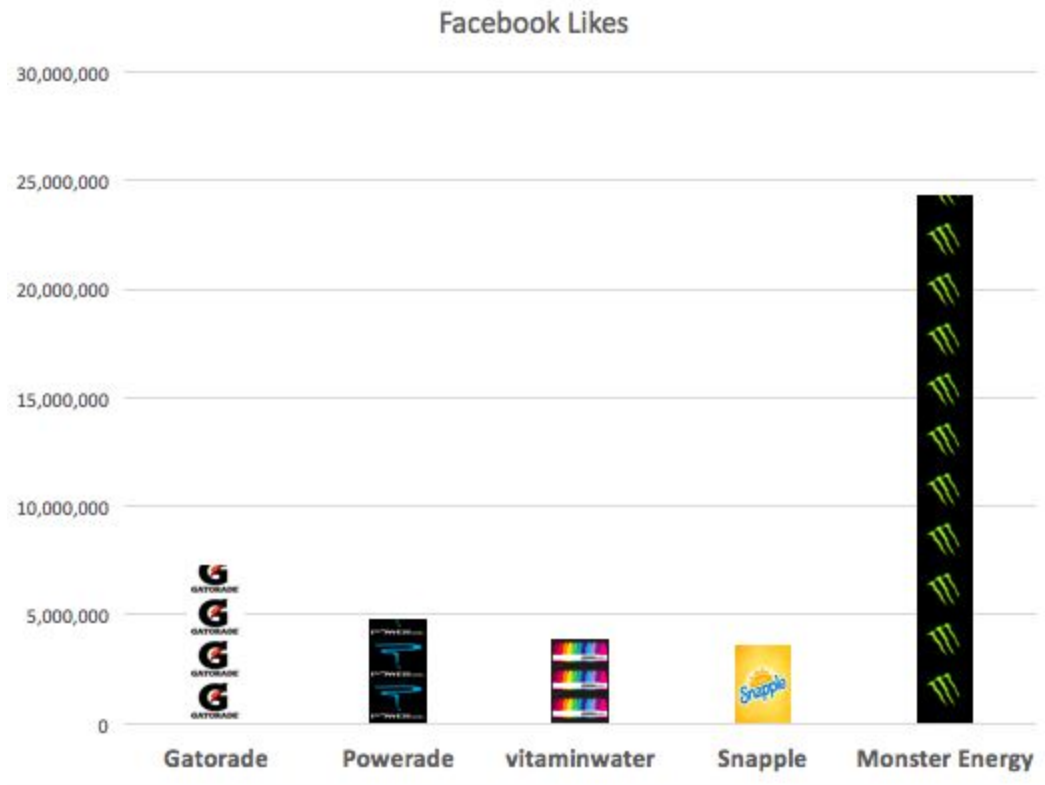
Gatorade maintains the highest social media following among sports drinks with 336,077 followers on Twitter and 7.3 million likes on Facebook. Whereas its competitors have far less, with 152,143 Twitter followers and 4.8 million Facebook likes for Powerade, and 125,808 Twitter followers and 3.9 million Facebook likes for vitaminwater. However, energy drinks are

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<sup>1</sup> Gatorade | G Series Sports Drinks for Energy, Hydration and Recovery. (n.d.). Retrieved May 22, 2016, from <http://www.gatorade.com/company/heritage>

<sup>2</sup> Bailey, S. (2015, May 22). Gatorade by PepsiCo: Still Athletic at 50. Retrieved May 22, 2016, from <http://marketrealist.com/2015/05/gatorades-position-sports-beverage-market/>

becoming a rising competitor for Gatorade, specifically Monster Energy that holds a much larger following with 24.3 million Facebook likes and 3,103,309 Twitter followers.



We are conducting a social media audit and conversation analysis on Gatorade to expand our understanding on the strengths and weaknesses of the brand, as well as the improvements we can make based on its competitor's performance. Since competition is always increasing, we will use our results to develop ways to remain loyal to Gatorade's fans while also enhancing its presence on social media. We will use this information to create tactics that will ensure Gatorade continues to grow and remain the largest market holder of the sports drink market.

## Method

Over a four week period beginning on April 20, 2016 and ending on May 20, 2016, we analyzed the social media accounts of Gatorade and two of its competitors: Powerade and vitaminwater. In doing this, we hoped to understand which types of social media involvement proved to be successful for each brand. We looked at the Facebook, Twitter and Instagram accounts for each company and compared the results.

We decided to look at Powerade as one of our competitors because of the similarities between this brand and Gatorade. The product itself from both companies is similar, but so is the

packaging and the name. This often leads to confusion about whether or not they are owned by the same company, but they are not. We wanted to see if the social media strategies echoed each other, or if this was the one area in which they truly differed.

The second competitor we choose to analyze was vitaminwater. We chose vitaminwater because it falls under the same category of “sports drinks” as the other two brands, but it boasts more health benefits. While Gatorade and Powerade are geared more towards athletes, vitaminwater’s target audience is anyone wanting to live a healthy lifestyle. We were curious to see how these different strategies were reflected in the various social media accounts.

In using Facebook, we looked at the number of posts per day, as well as the content within them, and the number of likes and interactions that each post was getting. For Twitter and Instagram, we also looked at the number of posts per day, the content, and the number of likes, but for Twitter, we added in the number of retweets each Tweet generated.

To analyze the social media channels of these three brands, we mainly used manual coding. In addition to this, we used the online tool Hash Tracker, which shows us what posts are associated with certain hashtags. Through our manual coding, we were able to discover which hashtags were used most frequently and this let us know what to plug into Hash Tracker. The hashtags that we actively searched were #Powerade, #Gatorade, #Vitaminwater, #powerthrough and #winfromwithin.

## **Social Media Audit:**

### Brand Consistency

Gatorade uses similar tactics in all its posts, making it a pretty consistent brand throughout channels. The brand is “Gatorade” on Facebook, @Gatorade on Twitter and @Gatorade on Instagram. This provides a consistent identity across channels. Each bio includes the same phrase: “Powering the next breakthrough in athletic performance. Your game is our lab. #winfromwithin,” ending with a link to Gatorade’s website.

Gatorade often utilizes hashtags such as #winfromwithin, #playcool and #thebestfuelthebest. These hashtags are used across Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. #Winfromwithin is the most frequently used hashtag across all channels.

On these social channels, logos are very seldom used. Gatorade utilizes a basic logo on its social channels as its profile picture or handle; however, on Instagram, a different logo is used than on Twitter and Facebook. The black and white logo (featured below) is also used on many of the

international profiles, such as Gatorade Canada. Gatorade also owns the Gatorade Endurance handle and profile, which utilizes an inverted black and white logo.



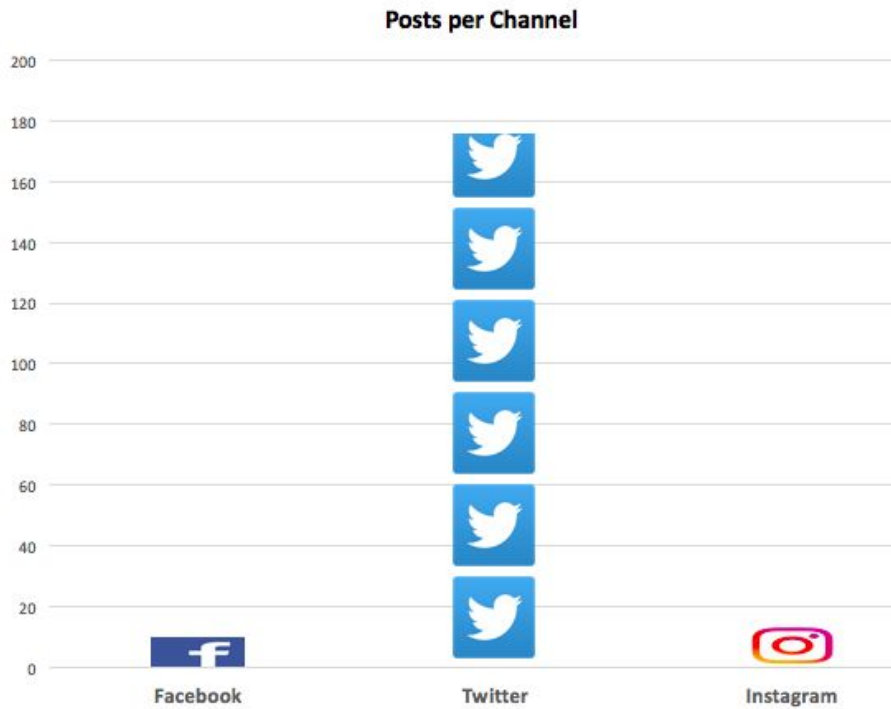
Although direct images of logos are not used of ten, the Gatorade logo is always showing in photos and videos posted by the brand. Most often, a bottle of Gatorade is featured in the photo or video.

With a recent release of Gatorade Frost, the hashtag #playcool surfaced and is now used very often. This shows a focus on marketing and communicating for summer sports and athletes as the weather gets warmer in the season. When we began tracking Gatorade's social media, #winfromwithin was utilized most frequently. However, within the last few days #playcool has risen in usage and popularity.

### Channel Frequency

Gatorade uses Facebook, Twitter and Instagram most frequently among social channels. Twitter is its most utilized channel as far as frequency; however, the number of tweets posted in the last month also includes replies and retweets. Between April 20 and May 20, Gatorade used Twitter 176 times. During the same time period, Gatorade posted on Instagram 14 times and Facebook 10 times. Twitter is utilized more frequently, and Instagram and Facebook slightly less. This pattern follows the change in platform popularity and shows Gatorade is focused on younger, more technology-savvy, consumers.

On average per day, Gatorade tweets six times per day, posts to Instagram once every two days and posts on Facebook once every three days. However, tweets do include reply tweets to consumers, which are usually regarding a negative experience. Most often Gatorade posts videos to Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. This is the most frequent and popular form of post. Throughout all channels, Gatorade maintains a motivational, coach-like voice. Gatorade doesn't try to hide the fact that the brand is pushing its consumers to buy the product and push themselves further in their athletic ventures.



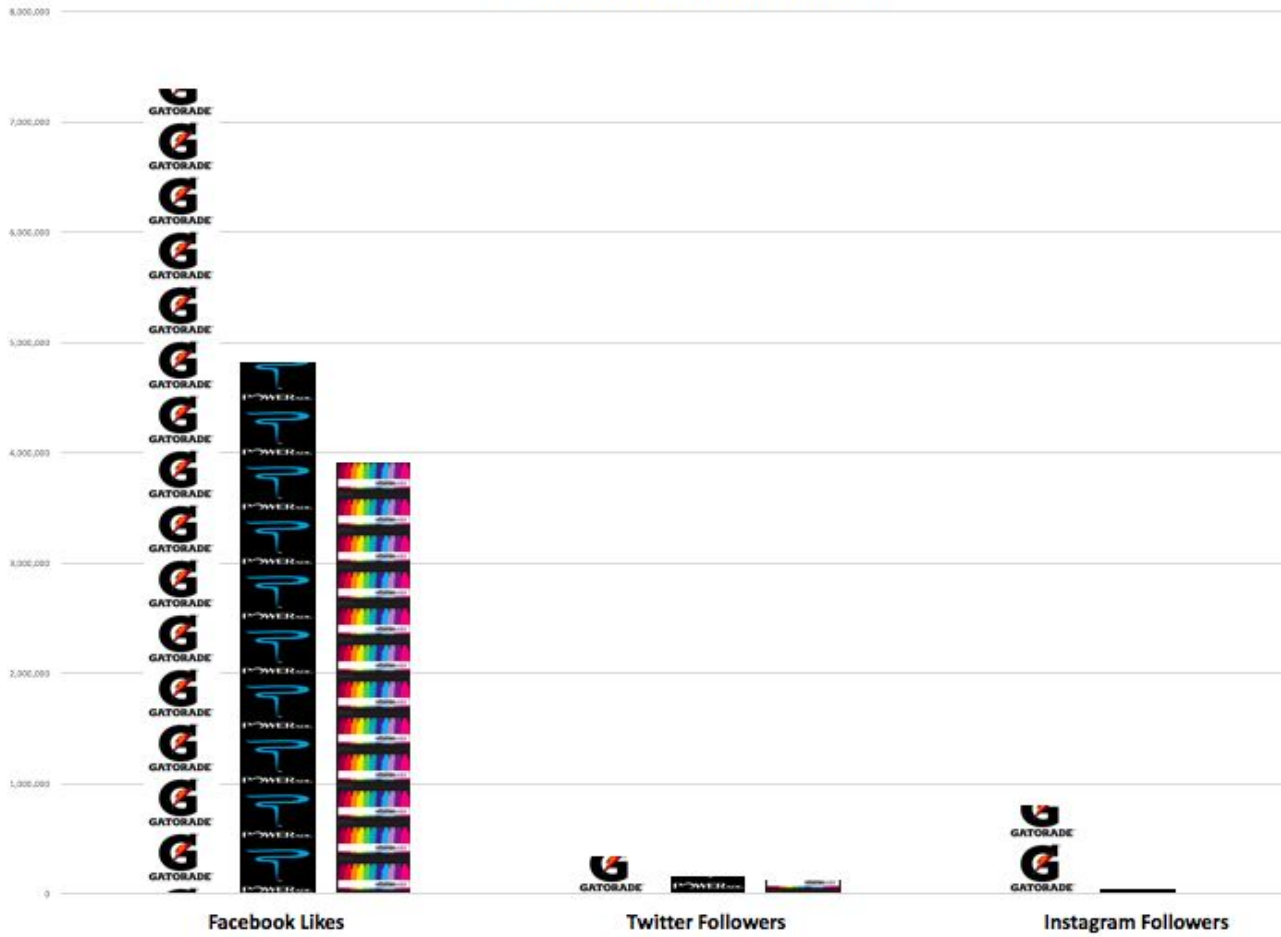
### Competitors

The competitors we analyzed for Gatorade were Powerade and vitaminwater. Powerade (@POWERADE) is a major player within the sports drinks market. However, Gatorade dominates the market and all brands in it by holding a much larger share than its direct competitor Powerade. Vitaminwater (@vitaminwater) remains a compelling competitor of Gatorade. Although vitaminwater (@vitaminwater) has a considerably small share compared to its competitors, the organization has grown from earning \$350 million in annual revenue in 2007, to earning more than \$1 billion in revenue through 2015.<sup>3</sup>

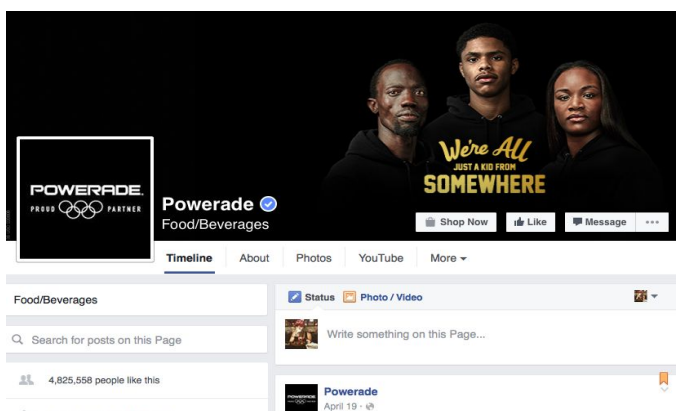
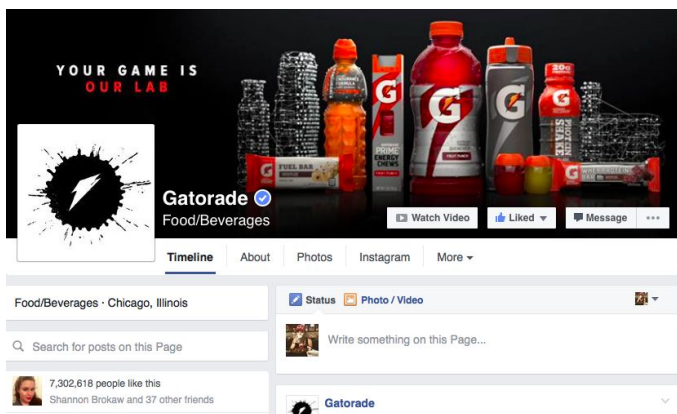
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<sup>3</sup> Ross, S. (2015, August 13). Vitaminwater Has Been Coca-Cola's Best Purchase | Investopedia. Retrieved May 24, 2016, from <http://www.investopedia.com/articles/markets/081315/vitaminwater-has-been-cocacolas-best-purchase.asp>

## Social Media Following by Brand

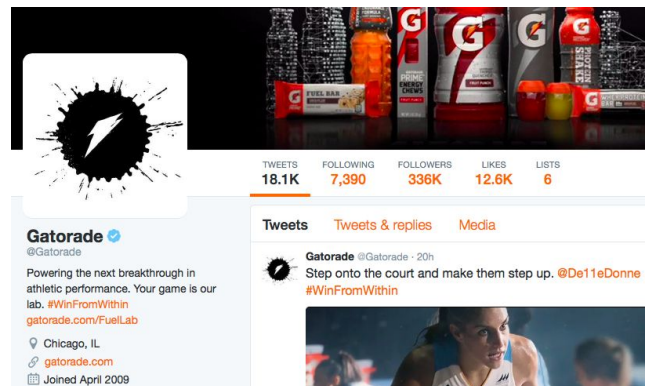


Powerade has maintained its social media presence through Twitter, Instagram and Facebook. Although the organization is active throughout each of its accounts, Facebook remains its strongest platform. Powerade’s Instagram account is fairly popular compared to some of its sport drink competitors, however its profile receives significantly less attention compared to Gatorade.



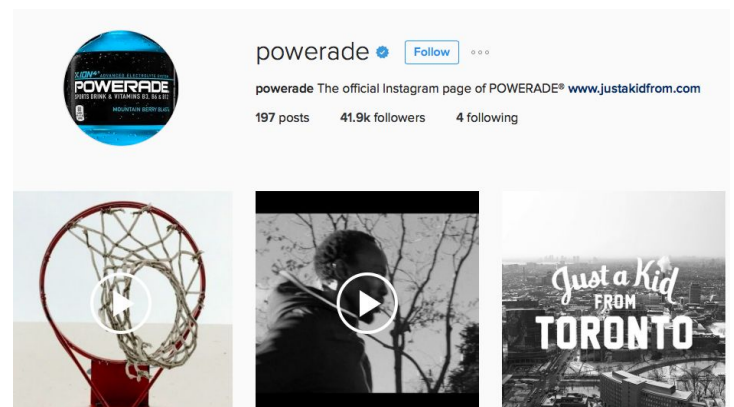
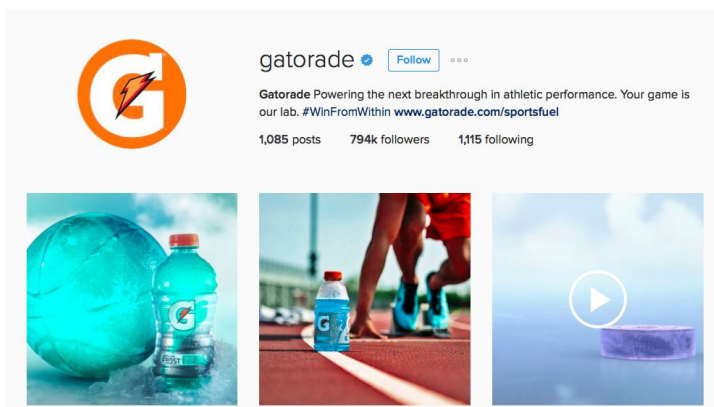


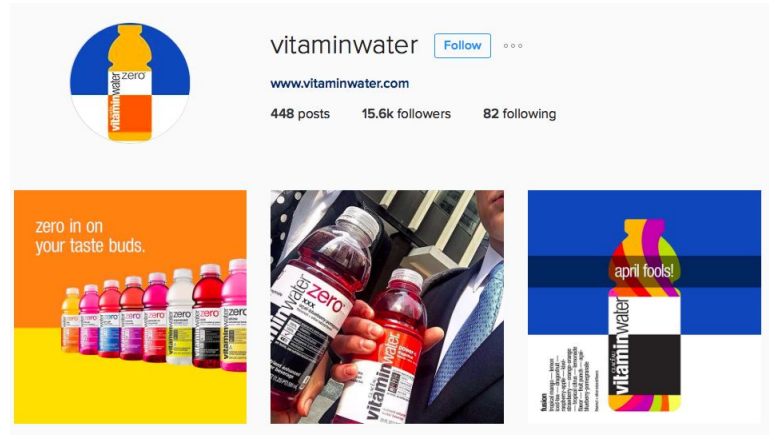
Vitaminwater continues to operate on all major social media platforms. However, the majority of its social media presence exists on Facebook. Vitaminwater’s Instagram following is slightly small, coming in at 15,000 followers; however, its Twitter account is another major component of its social media strategy, bringing in 126,000 followers. Gatorade’s Twitter presence is significantly stronger than Powerade and vitaminwater’s. Gatorade has 336,000 followers on Twitter, while Powerade has 152,000 and vitaminwater has 126,000.



Facebook remains the strongest platform for Gatorade, Powerade and vitaminwater. However, Gatorade has a much larger presence than its rivals. While Gatorade has 7.3 million likes, Powerade only has 4.8 million and vitaminwater has 3.9 million. Over the last month, Gatorade has posted on Facebook 10 times, Powerade has posted six times and vitaminwater has posted once. Showing that not only is Gatorade the most “liked” on Facebook, but the most active as well.

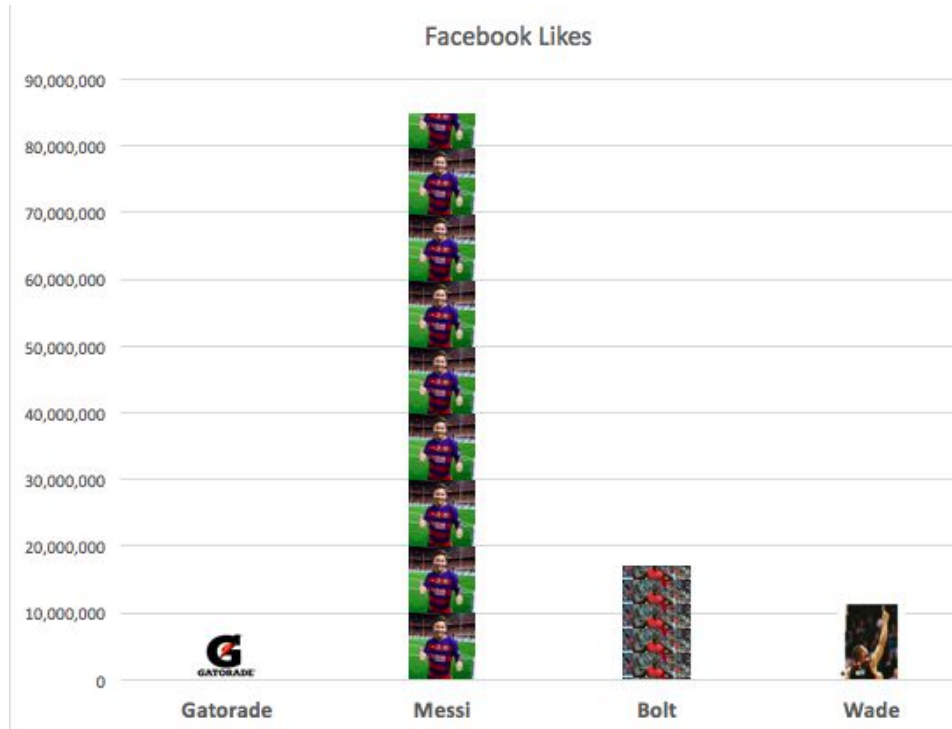
Gatorade’s Instagram account is significantly more popular than its competitors’ as well. Gatorade has more than 792,000 followers on Instagram with 1,082 posts. Powerade currently has just 41,600 followers and 197 posts. Vitaminwater continues to build its social media presence with a following of 15,600 followers. However, vitaminwater has posted 406 times, which is far more than Powerade has posted even with a following almost three times the size of vitaminwater’s.





Gatorade also has to compete with Powerade and vitaminwater through type of content produced and responses to its audience. Right now, Gatorade is focused on its release of its Gatorade Frost drink in preparation for summer. This includes releasing video spots with sponsored athletes to promote this new release. However, Powerade has shifted focus to the 2016 Olympics coming up this summer. This entails posting narratives about athletes in the games, sharing the journeys they took to get there. Vitaminwater has been using a little of both Gatorade and Powerade's strategies by focusing on a new product, as well as the athletes it sponsors who are competing in the 2016 Olympics.

Gatorade's competitors on social media are not only sports brands, but the athletes it sponsors as well. Gatorade sponsors more than 30 professional athletes globally. Many of these athletes are very well known, such as Dwyane Wade, Eli Manning and Serena Williams. These sponsored athletes are also brand advocates for Gatorade, meaning they should help drive Gatorade up in popularity. Gatorade has the potential to gain as many, or more, followers than even its most popular sponsored athletes. For example, FC Barcelona superstar, Lionel Messi, currently has 84,890,437 likes on his Facebook page. This is almost 80 million more likes than Gatorade has on its page. And Messi is not the only athlete with a following greater than Gatorade's. The brand has a better opportunity to further its popularity on social media if superstar athletes, such as Messi, share specific posts about Gatorade promoting the brand.



## Facebook

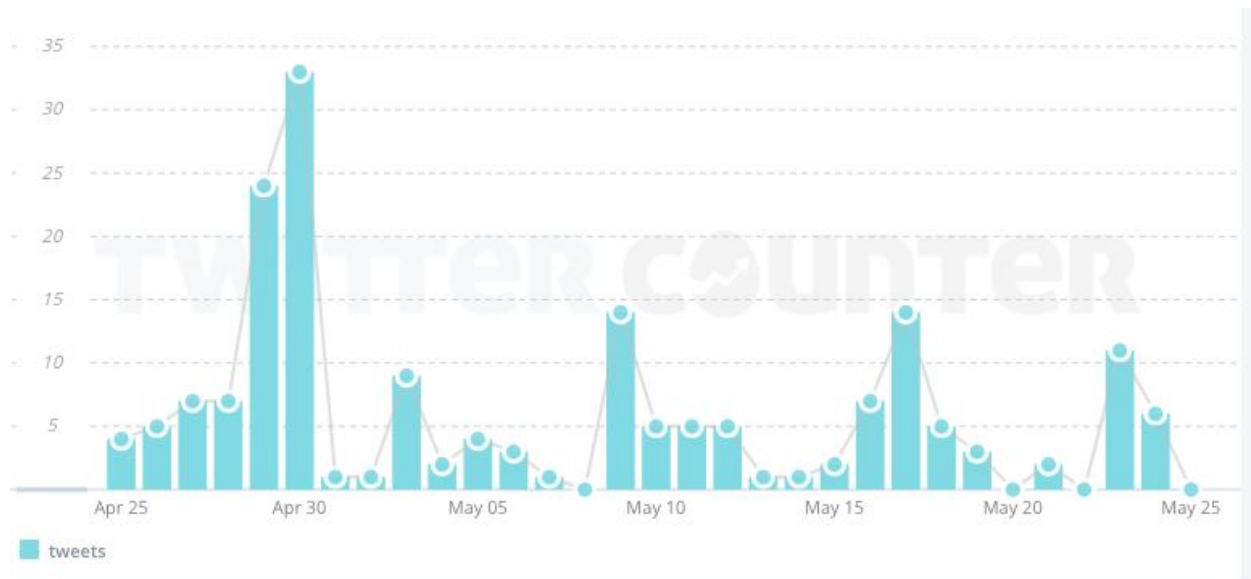
The Gatorade fan page on Facebook has the largest following of all three platforms with 7.3 million likes. Gatorade utilizes short video spots most frequently on its Facebook page, often featuring a sponsored athlete such as Dwayne Wade. Out of the 10 posts done in the last month, six were videos and four were photos. Gatorade rarely posts without a photo or video. The hashtags #winfromwithin and #playcool were used with almost all posts within the last month. Gatorade posts an average of once every three days on Facebook and receives an average of 8,270 likes per post.

The most successful posts done by Gatorade include its most popular athletes. The most popular post over the last month received 34,000 likes, and featured a photo of the new Gatorade Frost drink. It is likely that this was also a sponsored post. The post also included the hashtag #playcool to show what section of the brand it played to.



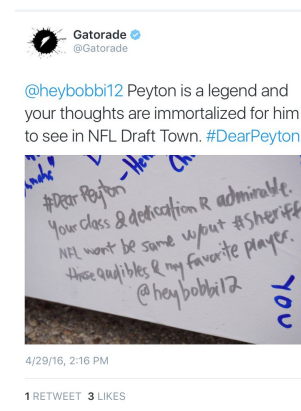
## Twitter

Gatorade's most active social media platform is Twitter. Although the following is significantly smaller than on Facebook, with just 336,131 followers, Twitter posts far more often on Twitter than Facebook. So far, Gatorade has generated 18,089 tweets and 12,621 favorites. On average, Gatorade gains 26 followers a day and tweets six times. Over the last month, Gatorade has tweeted 171 times, with the most active day generating 33 tweets. Both Powerade and vitaminwater tweet less than once per day on average. Gatorade's Twitter is the 4,809 most followed on Twitter in the world followed by Powerade at number 10,624 and vitaminwater at 12,690.



Gatorade's most active day on Twitter between April 20 and May 20 was April 30, a day the brand dedicated to Peyton Manning, starting hashtag #DearPeyton. (TweetStats, 2016) This effort entailed posting and retweeting letters to Peyton Manning thanking him for his contributions to the NFL and football in general.

On Twitter, the hashtag #winfromwithin is used most frequently. Over the last month, the hashtag was used 2,455 times in total, but only 17 times by Gatorade's account. This means that it is a popular hashtag among Twitter users in general, and is often used in reply tweets to Gatorade from consumers.

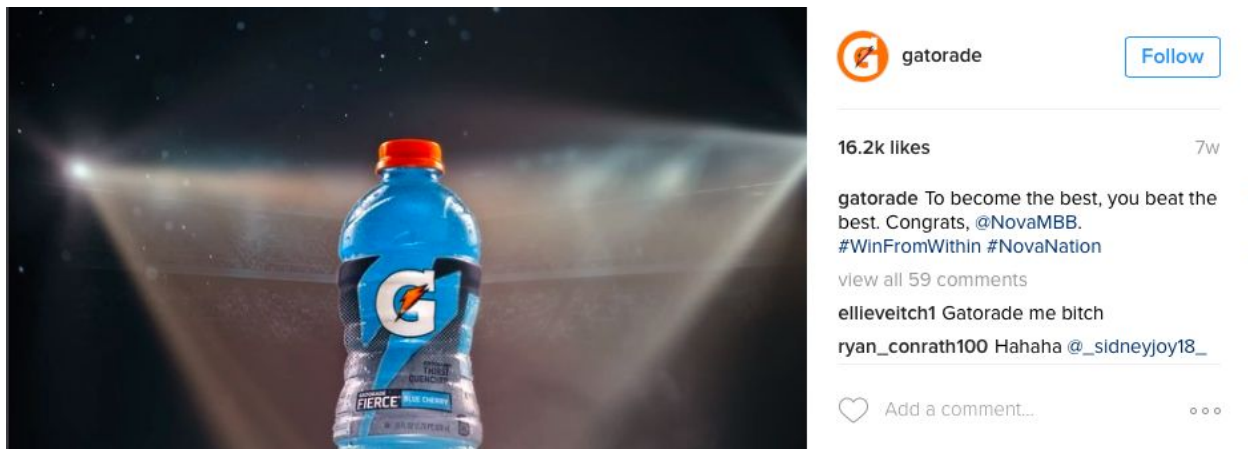


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## Instagram

Because Instagram is still so new, all brands are still trying to make themselves within this channel. Currently, Gatorade has a following of 794,000 followers with 1,085 posts since its creation. On average, Gatorade uses Instagram about once every two days, using it less frequently than Twitter but more frequently than Facebook. Much of what Gatorade generates on Instagram is similar or identical to the posts on Facebook and Twitter. In this platform, the graphics are the standout, which is useful for Gatorade as it generates a large amount of strong visuals. On average, Gatorade receives a total of 8,000 likes per photo on Instagram. This is almost the same as the amount of likes Gatorade receives on Facebook per post, even though the following on Facebook is much larger than that of Instagram, showing that Gatorade's Instagram followers are much more active on this channel.

The content shared on Instagram is heavily video footage of athletes consuming Gatorade during their workouts or games. All posts to the account feature a Gatorade bottle or logo in the frame. The best performing post throughout the length of this school term generated more than 16,000 likes, and was a congratulations post to Villanova Basketball for winning the NCAA Tournament.



The bio on Instagram is consistent with the one on Facebook and Twitter; however, the logo is different as beforementioned. This makes the branding slightly less consistent on Gatorade's part, and it would benefit from adding a consistent logo with the other two channels to make it more recognizable.

## **Results Conversation Analysis**

### ***Sentiment Analysis***

#### ***Social Media***

Despite having a large following on Facebook, Gatorade's fans don't post very actively on the page. After manually coding the visitor posts on Gatorade's Facebook page, we determined what percentage of the feedback was positive. Gatorade had 20 visitor posts over the last seven weeks, and 88 percent of them were positive.

Gatorade's Twitter has 336,000 followers and is actively engaged with them. On average, Gatorade tweets about four to six times daily, and many of those tweets are replies to negative tweets from followers. Many of these tweets are complaints about the product and Gatorade responds by asking dissatisfied customers to email customer support.

The way Instagram is set up, doesn't allow for much public interaction. Users can leave comments on the photos that are posted, but the comments are not time-stamped so that makes it difficult for us to determine which comments were made during our time frame of analysis. We know that Gatorade has 792,000 Instagram followers and the comments on their posts are generally reviews of the product, some positive and some negative.

### ***Discussion***

Gatorade successfully uses social media to market its brand and to differentiate themselves from their competition. We concluded this because by analyzing how many followers and likes they receive as well as audience engagement. Overall, we found that Gatorade uses most major social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube. However, Gatorade does not consistently utilize all platforms because they only post a few times a week versus multiple times a day. Facebook is the most popular platform for Gatorade because it has the largest following, but Gatorade tweets more than they post on Facebook.

Gatorade uses hashtags and content that specifically promotes their own brand and mission. Their content shows Gatorade is dedicated to their mission of improving an athlete's performance by using statements such as "your game is our lab." Also, Gatorade must engage more with their current audience and reply to positive feedback rather than just the negative. We also concluded that Gatorade has the strongest social media presence of all sports drink brands. Now, we will recommend some media strategies that Gatorade should use to increase their audience and their engagement.

## *Recommendations*

1. Gatorade should engage with positive comments and replies and not only the negative. If an audience member visits their Twitter page, they mostly see responses to criticisms rather than affirmations. This may cause potential audience members to think there are too many problems with Gatorade products and influence them to not become a consumer. If Gatorade retweets and replies to positive comments and tweets from followers, potential followers will see that and will influence them to believe Gatorade is a good brand.
2. Gatorade should continue using hashtags related to its brand such as “#winfromwithin” and “#thebestfuelthebest” because they are original, creative and successfully promote their overall mission. The hashtags distinguish Gatorade from other sports drink brands by showing they truly care about an athlete’s performance and create products to help them.
3. Gatorade should utilize its sponsored athletes by interacting with followers and requiring the athlete to retweet and share Gatorade content. This will allow for Gatorade’s brand and content to be seen by more people and can increase the chances of Gatorade receiving more followers. If athletes tag or “@” Gatorade in their posts, followers can easily go to Gatorade’s page and see their content.
4. Gatorade should use all its social media platforms more frequently and increase cross promotion. Everyone does not use the same social media platforms, so if Gatorade uses all of them more than a few times a week, it can reach more people. Also, if Gatorade links its Facebook or Instagram posts to Twitter, it can increase their following on all platforms because their audience members can click the link and access their page.