

## Australian Fans at the World Cup: Foursquare and Gowalla Checkins

The men's soccer World Cup is one of the biggest sporting events on the planet. In the lead up to the 2010 event held in South Africa, there was a lot of discussion amongst journalists, marketers, social media specialists and fans about how this World Cup would be different from previous ones because of social media.

Sniderman (2010, June 11) provides a brief history of social media and the World Cup in a post to Mashable. The 2002 World Cup was the first one to have an official site, where profiles were provided of all competing teams. (Sniderman, 2010, June 11) Beyond that, there was not much out there that people would recognize as social media related content about the World Cup. (Sniderman, 2010, June 11)<sup>1</sup> The 2006 World Cup occurred when MySpace was the most popular social network at the time. "US. Companies like Adidas, Nike and Puma were early adopters with campaigns that included print ads, television spots and online sites." (Sniderman, 2010, June 11) In connection with the World Cup, Google and Nike teamed up to create a social network for sport fans. (Sniderman, 2010, June 11) Beyond that, many sport related websites and fans had established their own blogs and were posting about the World Cup. . (Sniderman, 2010, June 11)

Sniderman and other documented social media usage related to the World Cup in the run up to its start. This included CNN creating two badges related to the World Cup on Foursquare, and soccer players being available to fans on Twitter.<sup>2</sup> (Sniderman, 2010, June 11) McDonalds created an online fantasy game. (Yeomans, 2010, June 1) Powerade, Coca-Cola, Budweiser and Adidas uploaded videos to YouTube. (Yeomans, 2010, June 1) Visa, Adidas, Budweiser and Continental engaged World Cup fans on Facebook. (Yeomans, 2010, June 1)

CNN's World Cup Foursquare badges received a fair amount of attention as an innovative marketing tool. At the same time, there was a lot of discussion about the potential usefulness and high adoption rates of geolocation sites like Foursquare and Gowalla in the general social media blogosphere.<sup>3</sup> Despite the attention Foursquare got in the run up to the World, in the post World Cup social media measures of how much people used various services to talk about the games and how many people fanned what pages, Foursquare and other geolocation services were largely ignored; no one talked about their metrics in the context of World Cup related checkins.

This chapter attempts to fill that void by looking at the total Foursquare and Gowalla checkins based on the teams playing. The purpose is to determine if there are

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<sup>1</sup> The author of this dissertation recalls fanpages created on sites such as Geocities and Angelfire. The author also recalls some discussion about the World Cup taking place on LiveJournal. LiveJournal was one of the earliest social networks in that it linked people in unique ways that allowed them to follow people's content creation streams. Beyond these, mailing lists were active and while the author cannot recall any activity, there likely were groups that were actively discussing the event.

<sup>2</sup> Sniderman (2010, June 11) pointed out that 10 of the 23 men on the USMNT's roster had Twitter accounts.

<sup>3</sup> An idea as to the volume of discussion can be found using Google's blog search in the period between June 1, 2010 and July 15, 2010:

[http://www.google.com.au/search?q=gowalla+foursquare&hl=en&prmdo=1&sa=X&source=ln&tbs=blg%3A1%2Ccdr%3A1%2Ccd\\_min%3A1%2F6%2F2010%2Ccd\\_max%3A15%2F7%2F2010](http://www.google.com.au/search?q=gowalla+foursquare&hl=en&prmdo=1&sa=X&source=ln&tbs=blg%3A1%2Ccdr%3A1%2Ccd_min%3A1%2F6%2F2010%2Ccd_max%3A15%2F7%2F2010)

different national patterns for checkins. This is important for several reasons. The first reason this is important is it helps to understand how Australian sport fans utilize geolocation services at sporting events outside the country and provides greater insight into how Australian sport fandom functions. Second, the data can help determine the adoption rate of both sites amongst different national groups to supplement Alexa national rankings. Adoption rates for sites are often different based on different national needs and online cultural practices.<sup>4</sup> Third, this data can help the comparative size of one nation's sport social media savvy community to another. Neither Foursquare nor Gowalla provide public data regarding the number of checkins to industry and interest specific venues. Sport related data cannot be independently removed. By doing an analysis focusing on national patterns at an international event with a lot of foreign visitors, this data becomes accessible in a way that it would not be otherwise. Issues with different levels of mobile infrastructure do not become relevant because all users are forced to use the same infrastructure: South Africa's. The last reason this data is important is it can help other event organizers and sponsors of international events plan better and try to create an appropriate geolocation service strategy. Organizers and sponsors may not want to coordinate a geolocation campaign as part of travel packages if those groups are unlikely to use the service when they get to the event.

A month prior to the start of the World Cup, Wikipedia was checked to get the name of all the venues that World Cup games would take place at.<sup>5</sup> A search was then conducted on Foursquare and Gowalla to find the corresponding location. If the location did not exist on Foursquare or Gowalla, a location was created.<sup>6</sup> If multiple locations existed, all locations were recorded. The locations were then matched against dates that games were being played at those venues. Information on what teams were playing at those venues on those dates was then added to another column. In the case of Foursquare, the venue location data was added and dated for checking the day prior to the event. This was because Gowalla shows the time that people checked in; Foursquare does not show who checked in and when. In order to get total checkins, totals were needed for the prior day. Several times in the period between a month prior to the World Cup and the start, locations were checked to make sure that the list was accurate. When needed, the calendar for checking was updated.<sup>7</sup> When the World Cup started, when the games were finished being played, total people checkins, total checkins and mayors were recorded on Facebook.<sup>8</sup> Total checkins were recorded on Gowalla. The checkins were

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<sup>4</sup> Different adoption rates and relative national popularity for social media sites can be found in a map provided in an article by Marya (2010, December 10). For instance, it shows that Mexicans were slower to use Facebook than some other countries. Mexico was one of the teams that played in the World Cup. Portugal was another country that was slower to adopt Facebook.

<sup>5</sup> The Wikipedia page can be found at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2010\\_FIFA\\_World\\_Cup](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2010_FIFA_World_Cup). This source was chosen because it clearly listed the venues, their locations and the games that would be played there. The official FIFA site was checked but the information was not presented as clearly.

<sup>6</sup> Locations were created at that time because the author wanted to have a complete list of locations prior to the start of the World Cup. She believed that if she did not create these locations, some one else would create them at a later date. This could result in multiple locations. It would also make tracking of total checkins more difficult.

<sup>7</sup> About a week before the start of the World Cup, CNN created several locations for World Cup venues. A few days before the start of the World Cup, Foursquare removed a few duplicate location entries.

<sup>8</sup> For the Germany vs. Spain game, between getting data before the event and after the event, Foursquare merged two locations. If just the one remaining location was used, it would have possibly included an

recorded at 9:00 AEST/ UTC+11, at 0:00 SAST / UTC+2. By that time, all checkins for night games should have been made. On Foursquare, math was then done to determine the difference in checkins from the previous day to get the total number of checkins for the game. The raw results are available in Appendix 11.

Raw Foursquare and Gowalla data makes it difficult to determine the nationality of people checking in. There is no way to determine which team a person barracks for based on their checkins. In order to correct for this and get data could be compared used to compare national checkins, the total and average number checkins by team based on all games that the team played in were calculated. This should help normalize the dataset by having a way to account for a game when a less popular team played against a more popular one. Average number of checkins also helps to address the problem of teams not playing the same number of games. An example using Gowalla: New Zealand played three games. Against Italy, there were 0 checkins at Mbombela Stadium. At Royal Bafokeng Stadium versus Slovakia, there was 1 checkin. Versus Paraguay at Peter Mokaba Stadium, there were 2 checkins. The average number of checkins for New Zealand was 1 and the total number of checkins was 3. A summary of these results can be found in Table 1 for Foursquare and Table 2 for Gowalla. Teams are sorted descending by average number of checkins by game.

Prior to the start of the World Cup, the author's initial thinking was that as the tournament went on, you would see more checkins at games as events progressed beyond the first round. This assumption was based on the idea that ticket prices would go up for later rounds, leading to a more affluent, social media connected audience attending these game. The author also assumed that the stadiums would be at capacity, where early first round games would not be. The author also assumed that South Africa would have the highest average checkins for all team, because of the home country advantage. The author also figured most of the teams left after the first round would be big name teams, which would have a wider audience than their own national base. The author also thought that Foursquare would always beat Gowalla by a lot based on news coverage by social media blogs covering the sector. The author also assumed that English speaking countries would be close to the top as the sites were originally launched in the United States for an English speaking audience.

Table 1

*Foursquare World Cup Checkins*

<b>Country</b>	<b>Total Checkins</b>	<b>Total Unique Visitors</b>	<b>Average Checkins</b>	<b>Average Unique Visitors</b>	<b>Games played</b>
Ghana	819	362	163.80	68.40	5
Spain	1105	608	157.86	86.86	7
Uruguay	1103	466	157.57	66.57	7
South Africa	399	179	133.00	59.67	3
Netherlands	885	427	126.43	61.00	7
Germany	801	434	114.43	62.00	7

additional 43 checks for the game that were from previous games. Thus, the previous venue's totals were subtracted from the venue that they were merged into.

Mexico	453	199	113.25	49.75	4
Argentina	512	228	102.40	45.60	5
Portugal	317	166	79.25	41.50	4
Nigeria	228	89	76.00	29.67	3
England	302	150	75.50	37.50	4
Italy	186	99	62.00	33.00	3
North Korea	176	83	58.67	27.67	3
France	166	82	55.33	27.33	3
Brazil	265	156	53.00	31.20	5
Chile	211	108	52.75	27.00	4
USA	205	102	51.25	25.50	4
Honduras	142	75	47.33	25.00	3
Denmark	134	59	44.67	19.67	3
Paraguay	209	115	41.80	23.00	5
Slovakia	152	95	38.00	23.75	4
Serbia	76	41	38.00	13.67	3
South Korea	149	77	37.25	19.25	4
Cameroon	110	64	36.67	21.33	3
Algeria	102	60	34.00	20.00	3
Switzerland	94	55	31.33	18.33	3
Slovenia	93	43	31.00	14.33	3
Côte d'Ivoire	88	59	29.33	11.19	3
Australia	85	44	28.33	14.67	3
New Zealand	75	49	25.00	16.33	3
Japan	85	57	21.25	14.25	4
Greece	55	29	17.33	9.67	3

Table 2

*Gowalla World Cup Checkins*

<b>Team</b>	<b>Total Checkins</b>	<b>Average Checkins</b>	<b>Games</b>
Netherlands	30	4.29	7
Germany	27	3.86	7
Argentina	18	3.60	5
Ghana	17	3.40	5
Spain	21	3.00	7
Denmark	9	3.00	3
Uruguay	20	2.86	7
Cameroon	8	2.67	3
England	10	2.50	4
Algeria	7	2.33	3
Italy	7	2.33	3
Portugal	9	2.25	4
Slovakia	8	2.00	4
Brazil	9	1.80	5
Japan	7	1.75	4
Mexico	7	1.75	4
United States	7	1.75	4

Paraguay	8	1.60	5
Chile	6	1.50	4
Australia	4	1.33	3
France	4	1.33	3
Honduras	4	1.33	3
South Korea	4	1.00	4
New Zealand	3	1.00	3
Nigeria	3	1.00	3
Serbia	3	1.00	3
Switzerland	3	1.00	3
North Korea	2	0.67	3
Slovenia	2	0.67	3
South Africa	2	0.67	3
Côte d'Ivoire	1	0.33	3
Greece	0	0.00	3

Some of the author's assumptions appeared to be on the mark. Some of them were not. Appearing in the second round did not mean that a team climbed the ladder of total checkins. Witness Japan, Paraguay, South Korea, Slovakia, Brazil and Germany who are averaging less than 50 checkins a game on Foursquare at the end of round 2. Some of these are popular teams and they are all teams that played in the second round. Chile, Brazil, South Korea all appeared in the bottom 16 teams on Gowalla at the end of the second round. South Africa was not anywhere close to the top on Gowalla. It should barely held on to a top four spot on Gowalla, being passed by Mexico at the end of the second round for total checkins. Patterns the author thought would emerge did not.

The results clearly show that Gowalla and Foursquare users are not the same. The top teams for Foursquare are not the same top teams on Gowalla. Only Ghana appears in the top four on both lists. English language usage was not a factor in terms of number of checkins by national team. A number of teams that appeared in the top eight on both lists are from countries where English is not the national language. The United States appeared as number 17 on both lists.

Australians did not check in to games for their side in high numbers. On Gowalla, they averaged 1.33 checkins. On Foursquare, the Socceros averaged 28.33 checkins per game. The averages put them at 28<sup>th</sup> most popular on Foursquare and tied with three teams for 20<sup>th</sup> on Gowalla. Compared to other nationalities, Australians sport fans do not have as high of usage rates of Foursquare and Gowalla. They may be behind others in their adoption of more cutting edge social media related sites.

The results suggest that Foursquare has the potential to be useful for sport marketers looking to get into geolocation during major international sporting events. Popular games can easily get over 50 checkins, helping users to earn a swarm badge on Foursquare.<sup>9</sup> The popularity of the event and the nationalities being present would

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<sup>9</sup> Foursquare awards badges for certain types of checkins. One type is a Swarm badge, earned when 50 or more people check into a venue at the same time. Mashable introduced a Super Swam badge, for when 250 people check into a venue at the same time. Because Super Swarm badges were becoming increasingly easy to get at major events, Foursquare introduced a Super Duper Swarm badge for 500 checkins and a Epic Swarm badge for 1,000 checkins at a venue. (Van Grove, 2010, October 29) Two World Cup games

ultimately play a role in the effectiveness of such a strategy. If attendees were heavily Greek or Australian, then using these sites may not be as effective if the audience was Spanish, German, South African or Dutch.

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would have been eligible for these badges: South Africa versus Mexico for a Super Swarm and Uruguay versus Ghana for a Super Duper Swarm badge.