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"Athlete Branding in Social Media as a Way to Develop the

Sport Marketing of National Federation"

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MEMOS XXV – the best MEMOS ever!

Abstract

Sports marketing is gradually taking root in the Kyrgyz Republic, while concepts such as athlete branding still remain underutilized. Athlete branding holds substantial potential to capture the attention of both the National Triathlon Federation and individual triathletes.

The purpose of this research is to provide insight into how the National Federation can develop its sport marketing through athlete branding on social media. To provide these insights, the following questions were used: RQ1: How do triathletes' use social media to build their brands? RQ1a: What type of content do triathletes use to build their brands on social media? RQ1b: What other strategies do triathletes use to build their brands on social media?

To address these questions, 834 posts from 40 elite triathletes (both men and women) were monitored over a three-month period. The collected data was structured using the MABI coding system and analyzed in relation to on post types, engagement ratios, and signals.

Major findings spotlight the prevalence of content in the Athletic Performance dimension, with Reels being the most engaging post type. The results of the study provide recommendations for athletes on how optimize their branding in social media, and recommendations for the National Federation on how to integrate effective strategies into its sports marketing, to help increase the popularity of triathlon sports.

Résumé

Le marketing sportif commence à s'implanter progressivement en République kirghize, tandis que des concepts tels que la marque des athlètes demeurent sous-utilisés. Pourtant, la marque des athlètes présente un potentiel considérable pour capter l'attention à la fois de la Fédération nationale de triathlon et des triathlètes individuels.

L'objectif de cette recherche est d'apporter un éclairage sur la manière dont la fédération nationale peut développer son marketing sportif grâce à la marque des athlètes sur les réseaux sociaux. Pour fournir ces informations, les questions suivantes ont été posées : RQ1 : Comment les triathlètes utilisent-ils les réseaux sociaux pour construire leur marque ? RQ1a : Quels types de contenus les triathlètes utilisent-ils pour construire leur marque sur les réseaux sociaux ? RQ1b : Quelles autres stratégies les triathlètes utilisent-ils pour construire leur marque sur les réseaux sociaux ?

Pour répondre à ces questions, 834 publications de 40 triathlètes d'élite (hommes et femmes) ont été surveillées sur une période de trois mois. Les données collectées ont été structurées à l'aide du système de codage MABI et analysées en fonction des types de publications, des taux d'engagement et des signaux.

Les principales conclusions mettent en évidence la prévalence du contenu dans la dimension de la Performance Athlétique, les Reels étant le type de publication le plus engageant. Les résultats de l'étude fournissent des recommandations aux athlètes pour optimiser leur marque sur les réseaux sociaux, ainsi que des recommandations à la fédération nationale pour intégrer des stratégies efficaces dans son marketing sportif, afin d'accroître la popularité du sport de triathlon.

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I. Introduction

The Kyrgyz Republic is a small country in Central Asia that is in the early stages of developing its sports system. According to the National Statistical Committee in 2019, there were 192,000 athletes registered with official and state sports organizations, while the country's population was approximately 6.4 million people. Therefore, approximately only about 3% of the total population participates in organized sport.

Triathlon is a relatively new sport in the Kyrgyz Republic, attracting both professional athletes and amateurs. Despite the Kyrgyz Republic Triathlon Federation (KRTF) being founded only seven years ago, professional triathletes are now starting to excel and achieve more successful results. Additionally, triathlon is popular among amateurs, with the Federation consisting of around 100 professional athletes and 300 amateur athletes on average.

Sports marketing is just beginning to take root in the country, and concepts such as athlete branding are not yet widely utilized. However, athlete branding has immense potential to attract attention not only for the National Triathlon Federation and the national team but also for individual triathletes, thereby increasing sponsorship opportunities. The rise of social media and its growing popularity have created new platforms for athlete-fan interactions.

Triathlon's multi-sport nature, spectacle, and dynamism offer increased sponsorship opportunities and provide an ideal environment to explore the relationship between the National Federation's sports marketing and athlete branding in the country. Encouraged by these opportunities and the likelihood of success, the author initiated this project within the KRTF's work system.

Therefore, the purpose of this research was to provide insight into how the national federation can develop its sport marketing through athlete branding on social media and how can triathlon's popularity as a sport be increased through athlete branding. To provide these insights, the following questions were used to guide the research:

RQ1: How do triathletes' use social media to build their brands?

RQ1a: What type of content do triathletes use to build their brands on social media?

RQ1b: What other strategies do triathletes use to build their brands on social media?

To address these questions, this research paper first examines the existing research literature related to the topic, to build a framework for analyzing the data collected. Data collection for the project involved collecting data from the top triathlete's social media accounts. This involved conducting a three-month monitoring of forty accounts belonging to world elite triathletes (men and women) capturing and analyzing content posts and metrics related to these posts.

The outcome of this project is the development of a robust working system and action plan for the organization's further promotion and the athletes' advancement. With the implementation of this integrated system, the organization will be able to enhance engagement with potential triathlon fans, expand their audience, and foster their athletes as role models who can become influential figures on social media.

This research paper is structured as follows. The first chapter provides a comprehensive review of the existing literature on topics such as sport and social media, athlete branding, and signaling theory. This chapter critically examines key findings from previous studies and identifies the gaps in the current knowledge that this research aims to address.

The second chapter presents an overview of the research structure, including the methodology, data sources, and sample collection process. Additionally, it provides a concise explanation of the data analysis framework that will be employed to analyze the collected data.

The third chapter focuses on presenting the findings of this research. It highlights the main results and patterns observed from the analyzed samples, shedding light on the relationships between content athletes use in their branding and engagement ratio according to the coding system.

The fourth chapter briefly discusses the limitations of this work, acknowledging any potential constraints or challenges faced during the research process. Furthermore, it includes thoughtful discussions that provide a deeper understanding of the implications and significance of the findings.

Finally, the concluding chapter offers valuable recommendations based on the insights obtained throughout the research. These recommendations are derived from a holistic consideration of the entire study, aiming to provide practical guidance for Kyrgyz Republic Triathlon Federation in leveraging social media for effective athlete branding and federation's strategies.

II.   Literature Review

There are numerous research papers dedicated to the study of sports marketing, personal branding, and social media. Additionally, several individual works explore the relationship between social media and sports. To provide a more organized analysis and comprehensive understanding of the existing literature, this literature review will focus on several key topics: social media and sports, branding, athlete branding on social media, and the final section will examine the connection between athletes on social media and signaling theory.

2.1 Sport and Social Media

Businesses and brands have been compelled to adapt their methods of communication with consumers and generate income by utilizing interactive online tools due to the widespread use of social media (Shilbury, Westerbeek, Quick, Funk, & Karg, 2014).

According to Kunkel et al. (2023) sport social media related works has increased attention over time. More than half, 54% to be specific, of examined articles were about Twitter, which makes Twitter the most studied social media platform. Facebook was studied in 26% of articles, and Instagram in 23%. Instagram has increased in researchers' interest and attention since 2015. Kunkel et al. (2023) proposed a vision for future social media and sports research, according to them, next research should be focused on three areas: people, spaces, and technologies.

According to Filo et al. (2015), the opportunities and challenges of social media in sports have stimulated academic research in this field. Research conducted up until 2015 offers insights on how to optimize the strategic and operational use of social media. The authors acknowledge the difficulty of systematizing these ideas due to the dynamic and expansive nature of the digital world. In their work, they provide an overview of sports management research conducted on social networks. Filo et al. (2015) define social media as "new media

technologies that facilitate interactivity and co-creation, allowing for the development and sharing of user-generated content among organizations and individuals." In their review, Filo et al. (2015) categorize existing social media research into three categories based on the usage of social media: strategic use, operational use, and user-focused use.

The strategic use of social media category composts of research examining the roles and functions of social media from a brand perspective. This category includes studies related to the intended use and organizational goals of social media, the impact of social media on brand equity and outcomes, and the co-use of social media with traditional brand communication and advertising strategies. The relationship marketing perspective was found to be the most frequently used framework within this category (Filo et al., 2015). The relationship perspective focuses on long-term results and emphasizes consumer interaction as an ongoing process. This marketing approach enables brands to profit in the long run and build a loyal customer base (Doyle, Su & Kunkel, 2022).

According to Achen (2017), relationship marketing should guide the use of social media as a marketing tool due to its ability to build relationships through communication, interaction, and value co-creation. Every interaction between the organization and the customer contributes to building relationships, and when relationship marketing is successfully implemented, customers and the organization can collaboratively work towards common goals through communication, engagement, feedback, and various forms of interaction.

The results of research by Pronschinske et al. (2012) emphasized the importance of two-way dialogue between teams' official pages and fans in engagement strategies to attract new Facebook users. According to results, fans are willingly joining the discussion boards and have a desire to communicate with other fans or organization directly. Thus, exchange relationship between fans and organization is necessary to increase social media followers.

The operational use of social media category focuses on research exploring the daily usage patterns of social media by brands. Studies within this category simplify and aid in understanding the different subcategories of social media posts. Analysis of these categories indicates that social media technologies provide brands with the opportunity to engage in interactive communication with fans in an engaging and personal manner. Research on the operational use of social media reveals more details about athletes' personal preferences for posts, how official social media accounts are used by events, the use of hashtags, and more. A significant amount of research has been devoted to examining the impact of gender on athletes' promotion via social media and the differences in preferences for content type (Filo, Lock, and Karg, 2015).

Pegoraro and Jinnah (2012) mentioned the importance of differentiating of personal brands in content analysis of athletes' Twitter accounts. Authors emphasized that sponsors need to do research, follow athletes and learn their content before the considering them for sponsorship.

The user-focused social media category includes studies that examine fans' motivations, limitations, perceptions, and preferences regarding social media use, as well as the demographics and user profiling of social media users. Studies in this category do not examine the practice of using social media but instead focus on user profiling and market structure. User-focused research indicates that consumers engage with sports through social media platforms for various reasons. Motives, preferences, and usage of different social media platforms can vary based on age, gender, education, and the sports context. In summary, user-focused research advances the concept that social media allows fans to engage in a process where they can express their opinions, insights, and fandom to a broader audience through different platforms (Filo, Lock, and Karg, 2015).

Sanderson (2010) highlights in his content analysis that social media become a tool for athletes to directly impact their public presentation. According to author, fans receive topics related to athlete's personal problems more positively when those delivered directly by athlete through his social media rather than traditional public media.

2.2 Athlete Brands

In the literature reviewed on social media and athlete branding, scholars employed various theories extensively. However, no recurring theories were identified in the research examined in this literature review.

Arai, Ko, and Ross (2014) proposed a conceptual model of athlete brand image (MABI). Their research provided the initial framework for better understanding athlete brand image and offered structure for the development and management of athlete brands. The authors defined an athlete brand as 'the public persona of an individual athlete who has established their own symbolic meaning and value in the market using their name, face, or other brand elements.' Arai et al. (2014) adopted Keller's customer-based brand equity model (1993) and considered athletic performance as a product-related attribute, while other off-field characteristics were regarded as non-product-related attributes. The MABI structure consists of three main dimensions (athletic performance, attractive appearance, and marketable lifestyle) with ten sub-dimensions (athletic expertise, competition style, sportsmanship, rivalry, physical attractiveness, symbol, body fitness, life story, role model, and relationship effort).

2.3 Athlete Branding on Social Media

Social media platforms offer athletes a tremendous opportunity to build their own brands and engage with their fans (Kunkel et al., 2016). Previous research approaches athlete branding on social media from three main perspectives: the experiences of athletes and gender-

based differences in those experiences, patterns in fan engagement and interactions, and factors influencing the growth of athletes' social media followers (Su, Baker, Doyle, & Kunkel, 2020). Su et al. (2020) developed hypotheses regarding the primary factors that influence the growth of social media followers, including athlete-related influences, league-related influences, team-related influences, and platform-related influences.

In their study focused on female athletes' self-presentation on social media, Li et al. (2021) analyzed the Instagram Stories of 37 soccer athletes over the course of a month during the 2019 FIFA Women's World Cup tournament. To analyze the data and the content of athletes' Instagram Stories, Li et al. (2021) constructed a codebook for categorization. This codebook consisted of six main categories (information sharing, opinion expression, interaction, promotion, behind-the-scenes stories, match-related information) and eighteen subcategories.

Gönkek and Gençer, (2023) tried to determine the visual self-presentation of professional athletes on Instagram. They examined twenty-four athletes from different sports and monitored 5 884 posts. Gönkek and Gençer used thematic coding to analyze selected content. The results of their research showed that male athletes share more posts than female athletes.

2.4 Signaling Theory

Na, Kunkel, and Doyle (2019) focused on the development of athlete brand image and applied the signaling theory. Their research extensively examined athlete-related content shared on social media, both directly and indirectly. The main findings of their study revealed that content related to Athletic Performance, specifically the "competition style," and Marketable Lifestyle, particularly the "role model" dimensions, were better perceived when published by indirect sources, such as independent news sources, team pages, and sports

organizations. However, when athletes directly posted content related to these sub-dimensions, it was perceived by consumers as bragging.

The authors also observed similar results when investigating the impact of different content types posted by direct and indirect sources on social media engagement. Indirect publications of content related to these two dimensions received a higher percentage of engagement compared to direct publications by athletes.

2.5 Conclusion of Literature Review

In conclusion, this literature review provides comprehensive overview of the existing literature related to sports, social media, and athlete branding. This review focused on several key topics: sports and social media, athlete brand, athlete branding on social media and the relationship between athletes and signaling theory.

The findings from reviewed literature shows that social media has become one of the important tools for businesses, brands, and organizations to engage with consumers and generate the income (Shilbury et al., 2014). The review shows the increase of studies related to sports and social media, and growing interest in platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram. In order to understand the growing dynamics of social media and its impact on sports marketing, future research should be focused on areas such as, people, spaces and technologies (Kunkel et al., 2023). The strategic use of social media by sports organizations has been found to be critical in building long-term relationships with fans and brand equity. Research related to operational use of social media reviews athletes' preferences for social media content. Additionally, the user-focused studies found that fans have different motives and preferences to be engaged in social media (Filo et al., 2015).

Studies of athlete branding provided the conceptual model of athlete brand image (MABI) as a structured framework for understanding and developing athlete brand image. The

MABI included three main dimensions such as athletic performance, attractive appearance, marketable lifestyle, each of which had specific sub-dimensions (Arai et al. 2014).

In addition, this review explored the importance of athlete branding in social media, where it is possible to directly interact with fans (Kunkel et al., 2016). Research on this topic have been focused on patterns of interaction with fans and factors influencing the grows of athlete's social media following (Su et al., 2020) and female athletes' self-presentation on social media (Li et al., 2021).

Finally, the application of signaling theory to athlete branding on social media highlighted the importance of indirect publications related to athletic performance and marketable lifestyle (Na et al., 2019).

In conclusion, this literature review provided a deeper understanding of the interaction between sports, social media, and athlete branding. The findings can inform sports organizations and athletes how to use social media to effectively promote athletes' brand and engage with fans to create important relationships with fans and stakeholders in digital era.

III.   Methodology

This chapter presents the methodology adopted for conducting the research on athlete branding and social media on the Instagram platform. The methodology chapter will review the inclusion criteria for the selection of forty athletes, the MABI coding system, and the sample collection and analysis methods used to ensure a comprehensive and objective examination of the data. Through the systematic application of these methods, this research aims to bring valuable insights into the field of sports marketing by offering a deeper understanding of athlete branding in social media and its implications for the marketing of sports organizations.

3.1 Study Sample and Data Collection

The focus of this research was solely on the Instagram platform for one main reason: according to the open data source Datareportal, as of January 2022, Instagram is the most widely used social media platform in the Kyrgyz Republic, with approximately 2.95 million registered users (Kemp, 2022).

According to previous research athletes mostly use Instagram to share a content related to business and personal lives. The results of their research showed that athletes from team sports prefer to share content more outside of their sports focusing on different visual self-presentation approaches, and only little fan related content was revealed by them, however athletes from individual sports share more content related to their sports (Gönkek and Gençer, 2023). Triathlon is individual sport, but it also has a team discipline as Team Relay, analysis of sample and data collection shed the light regarding to content preferences of athletes in triathlon.

3.1.1 Inclusion Criteria

Forty athletes, twenty for each gender, were selected from the World Triathlon Elite Rankings based on the available Ranking List as of January 2023. The top twenty athletes were chosen based on their number of followers, with a minimum requirement of one thousand followers, and they should have had at least ten posts during the September to November 2022 period. Only publicly accessible accounts with available information about "likes" and "comments" were included to track the engagement ratio. Table 1 and 2 show the list of included athletes.

To identify each profile, the author checked the Athlete Pages on the World Triathlon website. If any athletes did not indicate their Instagram profile on the World Triathlon's Athlete Pages, their accounts were found by searching their full names using the search engine on the Instagram platform.

Table 1.
Male Triathletes List.

	Rank	First Name	Last Name	YOB	Country	Verified	Instagram Account	Publications Amount 1.09.22-31.11.22	Followers Amount (January 2023)
1	1	Léo	Bergere	1996	FRA	Yes	@leobergere	22	36 082
2	2	Alex	Yee	1998	GBR	Yes	@lixsanyee	13	87 588
3	3	Hayden	Wilde	1997	NZL	Yes	@hayden_wilde	27	51 290
4	4	Jelle	Geens	1993	BEL	No	@jellegeens	20	19 466
5	5	Vincent	Luis	1989	FRA	Yes	@vincentluistri	16	187 380
6	6	Antonio	Serrat Seoane	1995	ESP	No	@serratantonio	11	8 477
7	7	Matthew	Hauser	1998	AUS	Yes	@matt_hauser	13	18 199
8	9	Manoel	Messias	1996	BRA	No	@manoelmessias_jr	10	26 189
9	10	Dorian	Coninx	1994	FRA	Yes	@dorian_coninx	20	33 069
10	11	Kristian	Blummenfelt	1994	NOR	Yes	@Kristianblu	42	215 476
11	12	Vasco	Vilaca	1999	POR	Yes	@vascovilaca	27	13 766
12	16	Jawad	Abdelmoula	1994	MAR	Yes	@jawad.abd	16	11 369
13	18	Tom	Richard	1993	FRA	No	@tomrichardtri	18	5 114
14	19	Michele	Sarzilla	1988	ITA	No	@msarzilla_tri	17	4 616
15	20	Pierre	Le Corre	1990	FRA	Yes	@pierre.le.corre	18	31 607
16	21	Jonas	Schomburg	1994	GER	No	@jonasschomburg	13	10 982
17	22	Roberto	Sanchez Mantecon	1996	ESP	Yes	@sanchezmantecon	42	16 207
18	23	Sergio	Baxter Cabrera	2000	ESP	No	@sergiobaxter00	30	7 296
19	24	Kenji	Nener	1993	JPN	No	@kenji_nener	14	2 317
20	29	Diego	Moya	1998	CHI	Yes	@dieg0_moya	11	11 250

Table 2.
Female Triathletes List.

	Rank	First Name	Last Name	YOB	Country	Verified	Instagram Account	Publications Amount 1.09.22-31.11.22	Followers Amount (January 2023)
1	1	Flora	Duffy	1987	BER	Yes	@floraduffy	27	103 448
2	2	Georgia	Taylor-Brown	1994	GBR	Yes	@georgiatb	23	57 183
3	3	Taylor	Spivey	1991	USA	Yes	@tkspivey	37	55 110
4	5	Beth	Potter	1991	GBR	Yes	@bethpotter91	28	44 710
5	6	Maya	Kingma	1995	NED	No	@mayakingma	17	6 226
6	8	Cassandre	Beaugrand	1997	FRA	Yes	@cassandrebeaugrand	29	135 925
7	9	Sophie	Coldwell	1995	GBR	Yes	@sophiecoldwell	21	28 384
8	10	Leonie	Periault	1994	FRA	Yes	@leonieperio	30	38 251
9	11	Miriam	Casillas García	1992	ESP	Yes	@miriamcasillasg	33	24 669
10	12	Emma	Lombardi	2001	FRA	No	@emma__lombardi	14	7 254
11	14	Kirsten	Kasper	1991	USA	No	@kirstenkasper	10	6 507
12	18	Anabel	Knoll	1996	GER	No	@anabelknoll	17	4 788
13	19	Julie	Derron	1996	SUI	No	@juliederron	16	3 182
14	20	Summer	Rappaport	1991	USA	Yes	@summerrappz	10	7 941
15	21	Alberte Kjær	Pedersen	1998	DEN	No	@albertekjaerp	18	3 336
16	24	Kate	Waugh	1999	GBR	No	@kate__waugh	19	11 583
17	25	Emy	Legault	1996	CAN	Yes	@emylegault	15	2 237
18	26	Vittoria	Lopes	1996	BRA	Yes	@vittorialopes	28	21 405
19	27	Sian	Rainsley	1997	USA	No	@sian_rainsley	17	6 600
20	28	Bianca	Seregni	2000	ITA	No	@biancaseregni	25	5 260

3.1.2 Data Collection

The posts on each account were monitored during the period of September to November 2022, which corresponds to the last three months of the fourteenth season of the World Triathlon Championship Series. Data for each account was collected using CrowdTangle, which is a tool provided by Meta (parent company of Facebook and Instagram) that is used to make it easier to view, follow, analyze, and report on what is happening on public content on social media. On its website, CrowdTangle explains what data can be recorded such as the type of post, the account who made the post, the number of interactions or views that occur (CrowdTangle, 2023).

This resulted in a sample of 834 Instagram posts that was included in the research project. Once collected, the data sample was organized in several steps. Firstly, all available data from the posts, including verification status of accounts, publication dates, post types, likes, comments, tags, mentions, hashtags, sponsored and collaborated posts, and descriptions, were collected, detailed template can be seen in Appendix A. Secondly, to ensure objective analysis, the percentage of engagement ratio was calculated, allowing for a fair comparison

among all accounts, regardless of their varying numbers of followers. Lastly, all the data was analyzed using the engagement ratio to identify differences across various aspects, such as post types, collaborated posts, and differently coded content.

3.2 Development of Coding Framework

To analyze the data collected for this project, the MABI coding system proposed by Arai et al. (2014) was utilized. The coding system facilitated the identification of patterns, trends, and insights among athletes' content, enabling the determination of which topics or dimensions received more interactions with followers, detailed template can be seen in Table 3. The MABI coding system consists of three main dimensions: athletic performance, attractive appearance, and marketable lifestyle. Within these dimensions, there are ten sub-dimensions, including athletic expertise, competition style, sportsmanship, rivalry, physical attractiveness, symbol, body fitness, life story, role model, and relationship effort.

Table 3.
Template: Engagement Ratio and Relation to Codes.

Codes	AP: Athletic Expertise	AP: Competition Style	AP: Sportsmanship	AP: Rivalry	AA: Body Fitness	AA: Physical Attractiveness	AA: Symbol	ML: Life Story	ML: Relationship Effort	ML: Role Model
Highest Engagement										
Average Engagement										

All the collected posts from this time period were organized and structured according to the dimensions of the athlete brand image system. The coding system facilitated the identification of patterns, trends, and insights among the content posted by the athletes. Table 4 summarizes definitions of all sub dimensions.

Table 4. Arai et al. (2014).
Definitions of Athlete Brand Image Dimensions.

Dimension	Definition	Sub-dimension	Definition
Athletic performance	An athlete's sport performance related features	Athletic expertise	An athlete's individual achievement and athletic capability (winning, skills, proficiency in their sport)
		Competition style	An athlete's specific characteristics of his/her performance in a competition
		Sportsmanship	An athlete's virtuous behavior that people have determined is appropriate (fair play, respect for the game, integrity)
		Rivalry	An athlete's competitive relationship with other athletes
Attractive appearance	An athlete's attractive external appearance	Physical attractiveness	An athlete's physical qualities and characteristics that spectators find esthetically pleasing
		Symbol	An athlete's attractive personal style and trademark
		Body fitness	An athlete's body fitness in his/her sport
Marketable lifestyle	An athlete's off-field marketable features	Life story	An appealing, interesting off-field life story that includes a message and reflects the athlete's personal value
		Role model	An athlete's ethical behavior that society has determined is worth emulating
		Relationship effort	An athlete's positive attitude toward interaction with fans, spectators, sponsors and media

This research paper can thus identify which topics or dimensions of content receive more interactions with followers. It is important to note that athletes' profiles have varying numbers of followers. To obtain an objective assessment of the interactions between a post and followers, the percentage ratio between likes, comments, and the total number of followers for each profile was calculated.

Collaborated post as well as posts with tags, mentions and hashtags were identified as signaling posts. These tools allowed to track what signals athletes used in their content as senders, with which organizations and companies they prefer to be related. These tools also can be used to attract the audience and give the opportunity to accounts to be seen for wider group of users.

The next step involved understanding global users' preferences. This was done by analysing social media-related research, news, and statistics conducted by media agencies and Meta (the company behind Instagram). This step helped identify the preferred post formats and the types of posts that users generally engage with more, such as video, reels (short videos), pictures/photo, or album, can be seen in Figure1. Additionally, this step provided insights into global trends and tendencies on the Instagram platform.

Figure 1.
Posts Types.
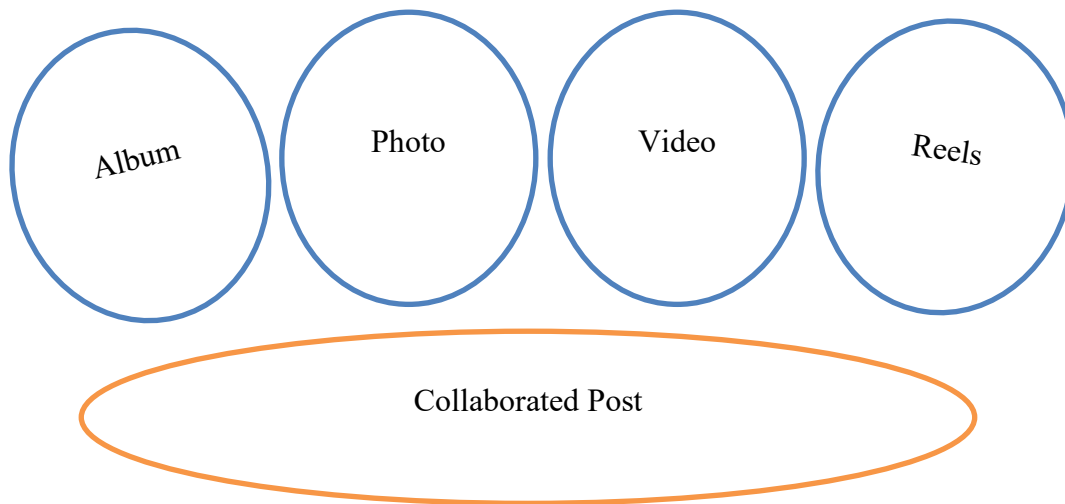
In summary, this methodology chapter establishes a robust framework for the research. By exclusively focusing on Instagram due to its widespread usage in the Kyrgyz Republic, participant selection criteria were defined to ensure gender balance and visibility. The data collection process involved monitoring 834 posts from forty elite triathletes during a specific timeframe using CrowdTangle. The MABI coding system facilitated a comprehensive analysis of athletes' content, enabling the identification of trends and insights. Engagement ratios, and signaling theory were employed for nuanced data analysis. Overall, this methodological foundation positions the study to gain valuable insights into athlete branding within the context of sports marketing on social media.

IV.   Findings

This chapter presents the results of research on athlete branding in social media (Instagram) and its relation to the marketing efforts of the National Federation. The results identified how athletes use Instagram to build their brands, what kind of instruments they use, how they engage with followers and fans, analyzed the effectiveness of different types and coding variations of posts in terms of engagement and reach.

This research paper tried to answer following research questions:

RQ1: How do triathletes' use social media to build their brands?

RQ1a: What type of content do triathletes use to build their brands on social media?

RQ1b: What other strategies do triathletes use to build their brands on social media?

4.1 Overall Findings

Out of all 834 posts only 2 of them have no description. 42.5% of all accounts have a positive verification status in Instagram. Male triathletes tend to have more followers than female triathletes, 55% of male triathletes have averagely between 10 000 and 50 000 followers, while 50% of female triathletes have less than 10 000 followers. Interesting numbers in posts amount can be observed, 70% of male published 10-20 posts, 20% posted 21-30 posts and 10% of male triathletes published more than 40 posts in three-month period. While 50% female triathletes tend to post 10-20 posts, 40% of them published 21-30, and only 10% of female athletes post 31-40 posts.

Table 5 summarizes the allocation of post types.

Table 5.
Posts Types: Results

Type of Post	Male Triathletes	Female Triathletes	Total
Album	234	235	469
Photo	96	144	240
Video	0	1	1
Reels	54	70	124
Collaborated Post	38	18	56

Over 50% of all posts were posted as "albums". During the research, it was found that some athletes may publish a series of unrelated photos as an album in a single post, while others plan an album post as a selection of photos from certain competitions, events or situations with a logical connection. In comparison, albums with related pictures get more engagement than albums with just random pictures and videos. Figure 2 summarizes post types and their quantity.

Figure 2.
Posts Types Related to Total Posts Amount
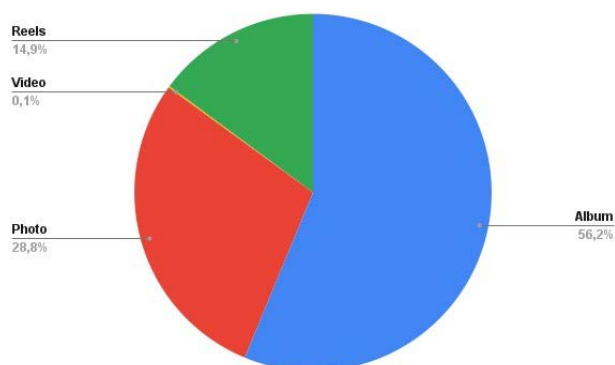
Figure 3.
Posts' Engagement Related to Total Engagement
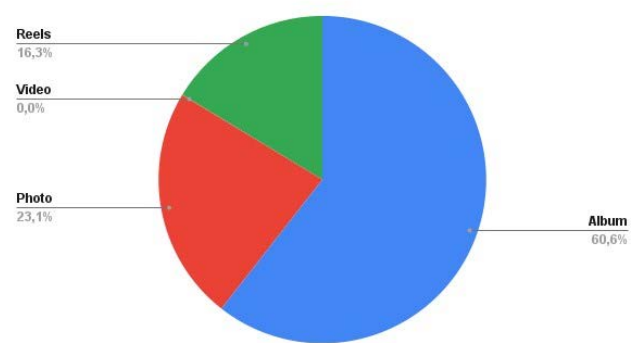
The highest total engagement ratios observed for album-posts were 68.84% for the female athlete and 43.68% for the male athlete's account. Both of these posts were collaborated

posts with World Triathlon from the Athletic Performance dimension and "competition style" sub dimension. Female athlete had 3,213 followers at the time of posting, while male athlete's account had 32,788 followers. Both posts were posted during the finale event World Triathlon Championships. Figure 3 shows the engagement ratio related to the types of posts.

The highest engagement ratios for photo-posts for female triathltes was 27.26% while men triathlete's post received 30.45%. Both athletes have less than 10 000 followers. The code of posts was the same "competition style" from Athletic Performance dimension.

The single video-post from the female triathlete, who had over 100,000 followers, received only 1.3% of the engagement ratio, and was related to the code "lifestyle" of Marketable Lifestyle dimension.

And the last type of posts – reels, showing interesting results. Reels received the highest engagement ratio among all 834 posts. A female triathlete with 24 000 followers received 201.5% of engagement ratio for collaborated publication with the account of Triathlon Federation of Spain, the code of this reels is "athletic expertise" from Athletic Performance dimension. A male triathlete with 13 000 followers received 127.6% engagement ratio for reels of "competition style" code from Athletic Performance dimension. The account of the event Super League Triathlon was tagged and mentioned in the description of post. Detailed information regarding post types and engagement ratio can be seen in Appendix B.1.

4.2 MABI Dimensions

The analysis of the collected Instagram posts was organized based on the three main dimensions of the MABI coding system: Athletic Performance, Attractive Appearance, and Marketable Lifestyle. These dimensions consist of several sub-dimensions that provide insights into the engagement patterns and content observed among the posts on triathletes' accounts. Table 6 presents the distribution of posts related to the three main dimensions.

The Athletic Performance dimension encompasses all posts related to athletes' performance in sports and is further divided into the following sub-dimensions: athletic expertise, competition style, sportsmanship, and rivalry (Arai et al., 2014).

Table 6.
Posts' Codes

Code	Posts Amount		Total
	Male Triathletes	**Female Triathletes**	
Athletic Performance	294	280	574
Attractive Appearance	45	63	108
Marketable Lifestyle	61	91	152

According to Arai et al. (2014), content related to "athletic expertise" focuses on athletes' personal achievements, experience, skills, and capabilities, attracting specific types of fans. These fans may view success in different ways, with some valuing winning and team performance, while others pay greater attention to the technical expertise and skillful play of the athletes.

A total of 214 posts were coded as "athletic expertise," with an equal distribution between male and female athletes, each gender posting 107 posts. Among male triathletes, the highest engagement ratio of 95.4% was achieved by a reels-post. For female triathletes, a collaboration post with the national federation of Spain resulted in the highest engagement ratio of 201.5% for reels content. The general average engagement ratio for the "athletic expertise" sub-dimension is 8.29%. There is a slight difference between the two genders, with male athletes receiving an average engagement ratio of 8.47% and female athletes receiving 8.1% engagement on average.

The "competition style" sub dimension includes content related to athletes' specific characteristics during the competitions (Arai et al., 2014). A total of 352 posts were coded as "competition style", 186 posts by male triathletes and 166 posts by female triathletes. This sub

dimension has the biggest number of posts among all content. Among men triathletes, the highest engagement ratio 127.6% was achieved by reels-post, with tag and mention of event organizers' account - Super League Triathlon. For female triathletes, album-post with tag of international and national federations' account achieved 68.8% of engagement ratio. General average engagement ratio for this sub dimension is 11.52%, Male athletes received 12.84% ratio in average and women athletes only 10.04%.

The "sportsmanship" sub dimension includes content related to athletes' fairness, behavior, respect towards others and game (Arai et al., 2014). Unfortunately, only few posts were coded as "sportsmanship", 7 posts to be specific, 1 from male athlete and 6 from female athletes. The male athlete received 11.5% engagement ratio, and post with highest ratio from a female athlete was a photo-post with 6% of engagement.

The most unpopular sub dimension is "rivalry" described by Arai et al. (2014) as competitive behavior and relationship with other athletes. Only one photo was posted by female athlete and achieved 1.2% of engagement.

Attractive Appearance is described by Arai et al. (2014) as a dimension which conclude the content related to the external appearance of the athletes and works as a "trademark". Attractive Appearance dimension is divided for three sub dimensions: body fitness, physical attractiveness and symbol. Totally 108 posts were related to this dimension.

The "body fitness" is related how athletes physically fit in their sports. According to Arai et al. (2014) consumers and fans evaluate attractiveness of an athlete by in terms of fitness and specific of sport. A total of 39 posts was coded as "body fitness", general average engagement ratio is 8.64%, 10.9% for men athletes and average for women athletes is 7.36%. The highest ratio for men was 31.2%, and 22.8% of engagement was the highest for women's post. Both posts were posted as album-post with mentions of athletes' sponsoring companies.

Arai et al. (2014) mentioned that the "physical attractiveness" is a big source of credibility. A total of 65 publications were coded by this sub dimension. General average engagement for this code is 7.85%, average for male and female athletes are not too different 7.54% for men and 8% for women. Interesting difference can be seen in highest engagement ratios between two genders. Posts of both genders were published as album-posts, men got as the highest ratio 22.9%, while female athlete's post achieved only 16.9%.

The "symbol" described by Arai et al. (2014) as sub dimension which refers to unique personal style of athlete, fashion. But this sub dimension was used only 4 times, 3 times by men and once by woman. Details can be seen in Table 7.

The Marketable Lifestyle dimension refers for the content related to athletes' off-field features. The off-field features influence the brand equity and consumers' image (Arai et al., 2014). Marketable Lifestyle has three sub dimensions: life story, relationship effort and role model.

The "life-story" refers for off-field stories related to personal values etc. (Arai et al., 2014). Totally 81 posts were coded by this sub dimension, general average engagement ratio is 7.63%, while the highest engagement for man's post was 20.2%, for woman's post was 27%. Post from man athlete was published as an album with tag and mention of World Triathlon's account. Post from woman athlete was published as reels with tags of her sponsoring companies. The "relationship effort" refers to interactions between athlete and fans, media, and relations with their audience (Arai et al., 2014). A total of 67 posts were coded by this sub dimension. The general average engagement for this code is 6.67%. There is a significant difference between the highest engagements, a post from male athlete was published as an album with tag of his sponsor and achieved 35.8% ratio. While post from woman athlete was published as reels with tags of IF, NF, NOC, and Olympic Team of Brazil, and received only 13.6% of engagement.

The "role model" refers to athletes' ethical behavior and their contribution to the society (Arai et al., 2014). This sub dimension was not popular with only 4 posts coded as "role-model". The highest engagement received by male athlete was 10.3%, and female athlete received 28.9 %. More details regarding post codes and engagement ratio can be seen in Appendix B.2.

Table 7.
Engagement and Relation to Codes.

Codes	Amount of Posts			Highest Engagement		Average Engagement Ratio		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Male	Female	General
Athletic Performance								
Athletic Expertise	107	107	214	95.4	201.5	8.47	8.1	8.29
Competition Style	186	166	352	127.6	68.8	12.84	10.04	11.52
Sportsmanship	1	6	7	11.5	6	11.5	7.1	7.74
Rivalry	0	1	1	0	1.2	0	1.2	0.6
Attractive Appearance								
Body Fitness	14	25	39	31.2	22.8	10.9	7.36	8.64
Physical Attractiveness	28	37	65	22.9	16.9	7.54	8	7.85
Symbol	3	1	4	9.8	2.8	5.54	2.8	4.86
Marketable Lifestyle								
Life Story	29	52	81	20.2	27	8.06	7.38	7.63
Relationship Effort	31	36	67	35.8	13.6	8.82	4.83	6.67
Role Model	1	3	4	10.3	28.9	10.3	16.9	15.29

Table 7 summarizes relation between engagement ratio and all sub dimensions.

4.3 Signals of Posts

In addition to individual posts created by athletes, collaborated posts, tags, and mentions play an important role in building the athletes' brand image on social media. Using collaborated posts with sports organizations or sponsoring companies, along with strategic

tagging and mentioning practices, can send a powerful message to the audience. These signals can be read as specific messages and potentially influence how signal receivers -fans perceive athletes and their brand image (Na et al., 2019). In line with signal theory, which states that people strategically send signals to convey desired traits or characteristics, analysis of collaborated posts, tags, and mentions provides valuable insight into how athletes strategically engage with other organizations to shape their presence in social media platform.

A "collab" post in Instagram is a single, co-created feed post or reels that can be seen in two accounts at the same time. One person on their account creates a publication and sends the invite to collaborate to the second person's account. After the acceptance, a publication can be seen in the feed of both accounts. Collab posts can help account to boost the reach, improve engagement, get more followers, and increase sales (Coleman, 2022).

A total of 56 collaborated posts with 16.2% of average engagement ratio were found in the data sample. Of these posts, 36 were collaborated with sponsoring companies, 5 were collaborated with international federation – World Triathlon, only 2 were collaborated with national federations. The remaining 18 posts were collaborated with "other" (other triathletes, media, etc.) accounts, details can be seen in Figure 4.

Figure 4.
Collaborated Posts Types
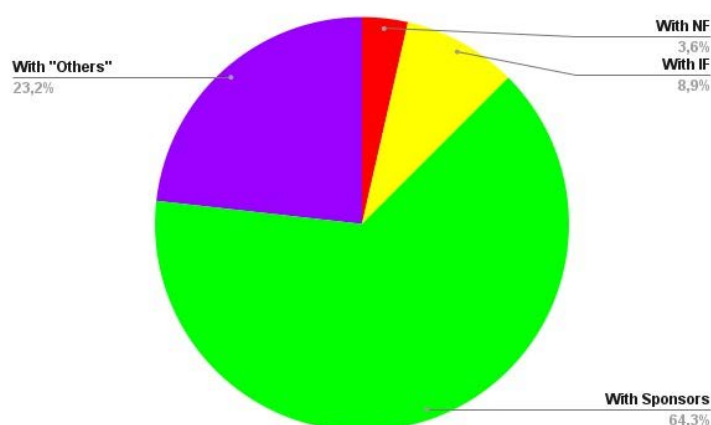
Other interesting instruments that send signals can be "tags" and "mentions" on Instagram. A "mention" can be done by using "@" before someone's account name in comment

or description section. A "tag" can be done on post itself. A total of 724 posts were published with "tags" feature, which is 87% of all publications posts in the data sample. A total of 823 accounts were tagged 4,599 times in the 724 posts, with the most tagged account is @asicsrunning. The Top 15 most tagged accounts can be seen in Table 8. More detailed information regarding to posts and tags can be seen in Appendix C.

Table 8.
Top 15 Most Tagged Accounts.

Account Name	Type / Relation	How many times account was tagged
@asicsrunning	Sponsor	118
@superleaguetriathlon	Event's LOC	94
@worldtriathlon	International Federation	83
@oakleybike	Sponsor	71
@iamspecialized_tri	Sponsor	63
@lapierrebikes	Sponsor	61
@huubdesign	Sponsor	58
@2xu	Sponsor	57
@asics	Sponsor	50
@maviccycling	Sponsor	48
@poissytri	Team / Club	43
@mobelsport	Sponsor	39
@cadexcycling	Sponsor	37
@bh_bikes	Sponsor	35
@maurten_official	Sponsor	34

The "mentions" function was used less, 587 posts were mentioning other accounts in their descriptions, which is 70% of all posts. A total of 507 accounts were mentioned by athletes

1,409 times, and the most mentioned account was @superleaguetriathlon. The list of top 15

most mentioned accounts can be seen in the Table 9. More detailed information regarding to

posts and mentions can be seen in Appendix C.

Table 9.
Top 15 Most Mentioned Accounts.

Account Name	Type / Relation	How many times account was mentioned
@superleaguetriathlon	Event's LOC	121
@worldtriathlon	International Federation	91
@tzaferes	Photographer	43
@wags.photo	Photographer	21
@thatcameraman	Photographer	20
@benlumleyphoto	Photographer	15
@puurfilm	Photo & Video Team	15
@georgiatb	Athlete	13
@specialized_japan	Sponsor	12
@triatlonsp	National Federation	12
@gustav_iden	Athlete	11
@kristianblu	Athlete	11
@tkspivey	Athlete	11
@chrisgourdyphoto	Photographer	10
@floraduffy	Athlete	10

The use of "hashtags" is one of the ways to categorize content and to help Instagram

algorithms to suggest posts to relevant audiences. Using hashtags can help the post reach new

target audience that are not yet connected with account. It helps to generate user specific feed

for consumers. The list of the top 15 used hashtags by observed athletes' accounts can be seen in Table 10.

Table 10.
Top 15 Most Used Hashtags

Account Name	Type / Relation	How many times hashtag was used
#triathlon	Sport	115
#run	Sport	38
#iamsuperleague	Event's hashtag	37
#swim	Sport	36
#bike	Sport	35
#worldtriathlon	International Federation	33
#triathlete	Sport	24
#triathlontraining	Sport	24
#superleaguetriathlon	Event's hashtag	23
#swimbikerun	Sport's Slogan	21
#fiammeoro	Team	21
#tri	Sport	20
#7mpsquad	Sponsor	19
#triatlon	Sport	18
#ddstriathlonteam	Team	18

From the analysis of signals that athletes utilized, triathletes tend to signal sponsoring companies and international federations in their posts. These connections can be described with trending "competition style" type of content. The majority of posts, 42% to be specific, were coded as "competition style", which shows us the trending of "on-field and on site" content.

Athletes tend to send signals of relation with World Triathlon event, to be seen as a part of the competition, to share their story of participation. According to analysis of data sample (e.g., Tables 8, 9 and 10) the majority of sponsoring companies are manufacturers of sports equipment which is used by the athletes during the competitions and training sessions.

To sum up, this chapter culminates the comprehensive exploration of athlete branding in the context of social media, specifically Instagram, and its implications for the marketing strategies of the national federation. Through a detailed analysis of athletes' utilization of Instagram as a branding tool, engagement patterns, and the effectiveness of different post types and coding variations, the study successfully addresses the research questions posed. The examination of different post types, including albums, photos, videos, and reels, offered a deeper understanding of their respective engagement ratios and audience appeal. Moreover, the application of the MABI coding system shed light on athletes' content alignment with dimensions. A significant role of collaborated posts, tags, and mentions as signals in shaping athletes' brand image emerged, underscoring their strategic importance. Overall, the findings from this chapter offer valuable insights into how athletes wield social media to construct their brand identity and engage with their followers, ultimately contributing to the broader landscape of sports marketing and athlete – persona interactions in the digital age.

V. Discussions and Limitations

5.1 Discussions

The results of this research are of great importance for the development of the sports system in the Kyrgyz Republic. As athlete branding becomes increasingly important in the global sports industry, it becomes critical for the Kyrgyz Republic Triathlon Federation to recognize the potential of social media and incorporate it into further effective sports marketing strategies. By leveraging athlete branding on social media, the federation can not only increase the visibility of triathlon as a sport but also attract more sponsorship opportunities, ultimately contributing to the overall growth of the sports system.

In addition, it is also important to note the opportunity for the triathlon federation to create "their own" role models in triathlon, who could be "influencers" and "decision-makers" in sports for a local audience. The growth in the number of users and the involvement of the younger generation in social networks underline the importance of the sports federation's presence on social media platforms. This provides an opportunity to be in "contact" with the new generation and be able to interact with them, which, in turn, will help to increase the recognition of sports and the sport's popularity.

The purpose of this research was to provide insights into how the national federation can develop its sport marketing through athlete branding on social media and how this sport's popularity can be increased through athlete branding. Overall, findings of this research gave us the answer and shed the light how social media platform Instagram is used by athletes to build their branding.

The results of this research gave answer for RQ1a providing a detailed insights related to content types used by athletes. Results also revealed a strong engagement pattern among triathletes' Instagram posts, with significant emphasis on the "athletic expertise" sub-dimension in the Athletic Performance dimension. This suggests that fans are particularly attracted to

athletes' personal achievements, experience, skills, and abilities. The large number of posts by athletes in the Athletic Performance dimension indicates that athletes are willing to share and prefer to share posts related to their professional activities more often than posts related to other dimensions.

High engagement rates in certain post types, such as reels, and collaborated posts, show the importance of fan engagement in athlete branding. It also highlights the importance of giving the right signals and appropriate associations of affiliation with certain sports organizations and sponsoring companies. Collaboration between athletes and organizations using tools such as collaborated posts, tags, mentions, and hashtags can increase content reach and audience trust and legitimacy for both collaborating brands. These tools increase audience engagement and amplify the impact of athlete branding.

The results of the study concluded that athletes signaled more about their connection with sponsorship companies and competition organizers, as well as with the international federation, rather than with their national federations. Analysis of using this Instagram's tools by athletes gave the answer for RQ1b, which shows us a positive result of strategical use of provided social media instruments. By using similar methods and tools, national federations can improve their strategies and emphasize belonging and connection with athletes.

The findings of this research are in line with previous studies on athlete branding and social media engagement that have consistently emphasized the importance of demonstrating athlete performance and experience. However, this study offers a unique contribution by specifically examining the context of triathlon, which has received limited attention in the literature in the past.

The application of signal theory provides valuable information for understanding the role of athlete branding in social media. This research supports the idea that athletes strategically use their online presence to signal their sporting experience, thereby attracting

certain types of fans who value their accomplishments and association with certain companies and organizations.

The key results of this research paper hold a practical importance for the Kyrgyz Republic Triathlon Federation and individual triathletes. Using the information from this research, they can strategically develop athlete branding strategies that highlight their sporting experience, thereby attracting a dedicated fan base and potential sponsorships and opportunities.

5.2 Limitations

It is important to acknowledge several limitations associated with this research endeavor. Firstly, it is crucial to note that the data collection phase was confined to a relatively brief three-month period and focused exclusively on a specific cohort of elite triathletes. To gain a more comprehensive understanding, future studies could extend the data collection period to encompass a longer duration and incorporate a broader spectrum of athletes.

Additionally, it is imperative to give due consideration to the cultural and contextual factors that may exert an influence on the efficacy of athlete branding within the Kyrgyz Republic. Given its status as a country with a developing sports system and a burgeoning interest in triathlon, a deep understanding of the unique preferences and values of the target audience becomes pivotal. Hence, future research endeavors could delve into the intricate cultural nuances that shape fan preferences, thereby identifying tailored content strategies that resonate profoundly with local audiences, thus bolstering athlete branding initiatives.

Furthermore, it is noteworthy to highlight certain limitations pertaining to the content analysis conducted in this study. Specifically, it is crucial to recognize the significance of the accompanying 'description' element in each post. While the majority of the 834 posts analyzed included descriptions, a mere four posts did not include a description. To glean further insights

into the successful construction of athlete branding within social media realms, undertaking a more meticulous examination of post descriptions in future research endeavors may yield valuable clarifications. Additionally, it is worth acknowledging the potential impact of the language variations employed in these descriptions.

Moreover, it is essential to underscore the need for additional research concerning post-albums. Given that a substantial portion of the posts examined were published as albums, conducting a comprehensive analysis becomes increasingly challenging. In terms of calculating engagement ratios, it becomes necessary to treat each post within the album as an individual entity, assuming its own unique identity. It is important to note that certain monitored post-albums encompassed diverse content that could be attributed to different codes. Nonetheless, for the purpose of analysis and providing general insights, the assignment of a dominant code was deemed necessary. It is important to recognize that such situations may potentially influence subscriber interactions. For instance, a subscriber might express appreciation for one particular photo within the album but exhibit a different reaction towards another. Additionally, in cases where albums contain a substantial number of photos, there exists a possibility that subscribers might not view the album in its entirety, thereby impacting the objectivity of their assessments.

Furthermore, it is important to acknowledge the existence and growing popularity of other social media platforms such as TikTok and new appearing platforms like Bluesky and Threads from Instagram. Additional research on the presence of athletes on other social media platforms may provide a more objective analysis of athlete branding and help to identify better recommendations for strategic use of social media.

VI.   Recommendations

The main aim of this research was to explore how athlete branding on social media can contribute to the marketing efforts of national federations. In order to obtain answers, it was necessary to analyze the content published by athletes and study the construction of their branding in social media platform - Instagram. Based on the findings and analysis derived from this study, the following recommendations are proposed to address the identified challenges effectively.

6.1 List of Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Expanding Social Media Presence

Given the significant role of social media in athlete branding, it is recommended that the Kyrgyz Republic Triathlon Federation actively expand its presence on relevant platforms. This includes promoting the official federation's account and directly encouraging triathletes to create and maintain professional Instagram profiles to increase visibility and interact effectively with fans.

To implement this recommendation, the following actions are needed:

- Develop detailed guidelines and practices for athletes' social media use to ensure consistent and brand-building content.

- Provide training and support to athletes in the effective use of social media, including the development of a content plan, content creation, interaction strategies, and utilization of available platform features. Since not all athletes are active users of social media, it is necessary to cater to their needs and provide the necessary support.

According to Kaktus Media, the average duration of social media marketing (SMM) courses for beginners is four weeks (Moiseeva, 2023). Therefore, it is crucial to allocate an

appropriate amount of time for training and periodically curating athletes' social media accounts.

The number of employees responsible for this task plays an important role. Given the small size of the KRTF team, it is recommended to start working closely with a small group of 4-5 athletes from both genders who can serve as ambassadors for athlete branding.

A critical success factor for this recommendation is the willingness of athletes to learn and maintain their accounts consistently. To keep athletes motivated, it is also suggested to consider offering monthly scholarships to selected athletes and establish agreements regarding the maintenance of their social media accounts.

Recommendation 2: Adaptation of content in triathletes' accounts

Given the potential challenges athletes may face in creating personal content plans, it is important to provide support and guidance to address their lack of experience in blogging. In cases where athletes encounter difficulties, the KRTF should assist them in adapting and implementing ideas into their content plans based on the findings from this study.

The analysis of posts from this research revealed that the majority of posts were published under the Athletic Performance dimension, and these posts received the highest engagement ratios from users. Therefore, it is recommended that athletes focus on publishing a dominant number of posts related to this dimension.

To effectively implement this content plan, it is crucial to provide athletes with detailed explanations about the content pertaining to the specific sub-dimensions and provide them with an approximate content plan. Additionally, organizing meetings with athletes during the initial 2-3 months to discuss and exchange creative ideas will facilitate the curation of their content plans and seamless integration of their posts into the KRTF's overall content plan. Time availability for all individuals involved is an important resource for the successful implementation of this recommendation.

However, it is important to note that trends in social media platforms are constantly evolving. Therefore, conducting periodic research and observations in this field is necessary to stay updated with user preferences and changes in platform algorithms.

Recommendation 3: Adaptation of content in the KRTF's account

To maximize the effectiveness of the Kyrgyz Republic Triathlon Federation's official page (@triathlon.kg) on Instagram, it is recommended to adapt the content to align with current trends and make use of various types of publications. Currently, the majority of posts on the federation's account are in photo-post format. However, to fully utilize the platform's features, it is advised to diversify the content by using these types such as albums, photo posts, and reels.

The research results revealed that the most frequently tagged and mentioned accounts are those competitions' local organizing committees and the international federation. As triathlon events such as the World Series, World Cups, and World Championships are conducted under the World Triathlon - International Federation, Instagram account of World Triathlon can represent the interests of these competitions and be associated as the official account for these events. This indicates that athletes, by signaling their affiliation with these accounts, aim to showcase to be related with events as participators of these competitions.

The desire of athletes to signal their association with competitions can also be leveraged in the marketing efforts of the KRTF. Since organizing triathlon competitions is one of the federation's responsibilities, it is recommended to utilize a unified Instagram account to promote both, the events and the KRTF itself.

To achieve this, it is advisable to use a single account for triathlon competitions which are organized by KRTF and actively engage with participants, using the platform to promote the events and integrate athletes. Athletes can be involved as signal senders by featuring them in content that highlights their participation, particularly through collaborated posts with athletes in the Athletic Performance dimension. Timely and instant posts from competitions

should be prioritized, with the federation's account being the first source of news about the competition winner. Collaborated posts with athletes' accounts related to such topics as, competition results, backstage of the event, interesting news can be used as one of the instruments to implement this recommendation.

Additionally, using Instagram features such as tags and mentions is recommended. Previous studies on signal theory have shown that content related to the "competition style" sub-dimension receives higher engagement and better audience perception when published by a sports organization or independent news sources rather than directly by athletes (Na et al., 2019). Therefore, such content should be shared through the national federation - KRTF's account, tagging and mentioning the athletes' accounts.

Encouraging athletes to use the national federation's hashtags is another step to structure their publications. These hashtags can include specific event tags or headings. Furthermore, incorporating hashtags to organize the content on the KRTF's page itself will make it easier for new subscribers to find and explore specific content, thereby stimulating users to not only publish new posts but also engage with existing content.

Considering the cultural context and preferences of the target audience, it is crucial to adapt content strategies that resonate with the local community. This may involve portraying triathletes as role models and influencers who embody the values and aspirations of the Kyrgyz Republic.

Conducting audience research to gain insights into the specific preferences, values, and interests of the local triathlon community is recommended. Based on these findings, content themes and narratives can be developed to align with the cultural nuances and aspirations of the target audience. Collaborating with local influencers, community leaders, and organizations can also help expand the reach and impact of athlete branding initiatives.

Recommendation 4: Future research and evaluation

To keep up with developments and changes in the field of athlete branding and social media, it is recommended to engage in ongoing research and evaluation. This will ensure that strategies are continuously improved and new trends or approaches are identified.

To achieve this, the following actions are needed:

- Establish a monitoring and evaluation system to track the effectiveness of athlete branding initiatives and social media engagement efforts.

- Stay updated on industry trends and technological changes in social media algorithms to tailor and adapt strategies accordingly.

- Foster collaboration with academic institutions, industry experts, and other stakeholders is also needed to conduct further research on athlete branding and its impact on sports marketing. Additionally, it will be necessary to explore the specifics of athlete branding on other social media platforms such as TikTok.

Table 11 provides insights to key recommendations. By implementing these recommendations, the Kyrgyz Republic Triathlon Federation can leverage athlete branding, enhance fan interaction, and attract a wider audience.

Table 11.
Key Recommendations.

Priority	Recommendation	Action	Lead	Resources	Timescales	Critical Success Factors
1	Expanding social media presence	Develop detailed guidelines and practices for athletes' social media use. Select the small group of athletes and provide them social media management courses.	Project Manager	Time SMM courses' cost Scholarships	February 2024	Willingness of athletes to learn and maintain their social media accounts

		Offer to selected athletes' monthly scholarship to keep them motivated.				
2	Adaptation of content in triathletes' accounts	Provide a content plan for athletes in first 2-3 months. Organize monthly meetings to discuss and exchange creative ideas. Observe and research of current trends in social media.	Project Manager	Time	February – April 2024	Time availability for all involved persons
3	Adaptation of content in KRTF's account	Prepare and implement the content plan with diverse types of posts. Plan and implement promotion of the events with integration of selected athletes. Diversify the content topics to keep audience interested. To use available instruments to send signals of relation with athletes: collaborated posts, tags, mentions, hashtags. Conduct research to find cultural context and preferences of audience.	Project Manager	Time	March – May 2024	Availability of experienced industrial researchers
4	Establish sustainability system	Create detailed evaluation system to track the effectiveness of athlete branding and integration with KRTF marketing.	Project Manager	Time Budget	Every three months	Time availability

		Stay updated and periodically monitor industry trends. Collaborate with industry experts to access latest research and statistics.				

6.2 Addition to Recommendations: Estimated Costs

Table 12 presents an overview of the potential costs that may arise during the project implementation. The indicated amounts are approximate, considering average prices, and the final cost may vary depending on specific circumstances. It should be noted that certain items are not included in the expense table as they are already accounted for in the budgets of related projects and cases.

Table 12.
Potential Expenses for Project Implementation.

Name	Unit cost	Amount	Total cost
SMM manager's salary	-		
Project manager's salary	-		
SMM courses for 4 athletes	285	4	1 140
Content creation for integrated posts (for 9 events)	400	9	3 600
SMM scholarship for 4 athletes (for one year period)	400	12	4 800
Extra SMM specialist for quarterly research and reports	365	4	1 460
Advertisement and promotion of integrated posts	100	9	900
Total:		**USD**	**11 900**

The average cost of SMM courses is 250-280 USD according to the Kaktus Media (Moiseeva, 2023). Based on the estimated duration of the one-month course program, a total of 1,140 USD will be required to cover the short-term courses for four athletes.

Within the project framework, athletes are expected to be able independently create content, so only few publications - collaborated posts will get the assistance of designers and editors. This support is necessary to maintain a consistent style for publications related to the promotion of triathlon sports competitions.

As previously mentioned, the continuous support and motivation of athletes are crucial for project's success. Hence, it is highly important to allocate a small monthly scholarship. The designated amount should be provided during the whole period of implementation, with potential adjustments based on athlete – KRTF agreements or sponsorship contracts facilitated through the federation or national team.

Considering that the current federation team has only one part-time SMM manager, the engagement of additional specialists for reporting and industry research becomes necessary. The cost of this expense is estimated based on average rates and may vary in subsequent periods.

Furthermore, it should be emphasized that every sporting event already has its own promotion and advertising budgets. The costs reflected in the table specifically refer to advertising content involving the selected athletes. The indicated costs are average, according to the organization's advertising campaigns from the previous year.

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Appendix A.
Sample Collection Template.

№	Name	Account	Verified	Link of post	Post Created Date	Type	Collaborated Post	Likes	Comments	Total Interactions	Followers at Posting of Day of Collecting	Engagement Ratio in %	Tags	Mentions	Sponsored	Hashtags	Code	Description
1	Leo Bergere	leobergere	Yes	https://www.instagram.com/p/ClhsNhPoq/	29.11.2022	Album		6571	34	6605	34601	19.08904367	mako_sport, dtswiss, cervelo, cupra_france, sportsdefense, asicsrunning, spin_tri_athle, vincentduterii, maurten_france	puurlim			AP competition style	Still buzzing about last weekend, massive thanks to everyone who made it possible !!! Really had a blast racing with these legends all season long & I can't wait for more in the future 🔥 Photo: @puurlim
2	Leo Bergere	leobergere	Yes	https://www.instagram.com/p/CkGpq72lkcm/	27.11.2022	Reels	asicsrunning	6969	30	6989	32787	21.31637539	leobergere	leobergere	asicsrunning	#SwimBikeRun #TriathlonLife #WorldTriathlon #RunningTerritory #Running #LiveUplifted #SoundMindSoundBody	AP competition style	🏆 Brilliant @leobergere takes the win at the @worldtriathlon final race, with that, he takes the overall series victory in Abu Dhabi. What an impressive performance! ⚡ I've been chasing this first win for a long time, I focussed hard on my running training for this race. It's an incredible feeling to finish first on the grand finale and take the series win. #SwimBikeRun #TriathlonLife #WorldTriathlon #RunningTerritory #Running #LiveUplifted #SoundMindSoundBody
3	Flora Duffy	floraduffy	Yes	https://www.instagram.com/p/Ckr14LtuMJJ/	27.11.2022	Album		4853	53	4906	103300	4.749273999	bermuda, asics, apex_group_ltd, iamspecialized_tri, conyexins, oakleybike, roka, gosuthriathlon, maurten_official, tinermovement, hammerheadrides, worldtriathlon, unepcustombikes, georgiatb, bermudagovernment, sramroad	worldtriathlon, andyastleick			AP competition style	More @worldtriathlon Grand Final snaps (they don't come around like this often, so bear with me!). Turned out to be an incredible day. Thanks for the countless messages and comments. Have read them all, and appreciate all the support immensely. All images by @andyastleick
4	Flora Duffy	floraduffy	Yes	https://www.instagram.com/reel/CibD5uYlZ6q/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link	26.11.2022	Reels	asicsrunning	8907	47	8954	103300	8.667967406	floraduffy	floraduffy, worldtriathlon, georgiatb	asicsrunning	#TriathlonLife #SwimBikeRun #Triathlon #RunningMotivation #Wonderrunners #RunningTerritory #LiveUplifted #SoundMindSoundBody	AP competition style	🇧🇲@floraduffy takes record 4th @worldtriathlon championship title in Abu Dhabi. ⚡ "Winning my 4th title feels amazing. I knew it was going to be tough going into it, especially racing against @georgiatb. I had some doubts when I overtook Georgia; did I go too early? Am I gonna blow up? She's come back on me before. When I made my move, I had to stick with it; so it made sure to keep cool in my head, but also at the aid stations. In the end it worked out, I'm happy beyond words!"
5	Alex Yee	lisaanyee	Yes	https://www.instagram.com/p/CjbORmPeoCo7/	08.10.2022	Photo		3835	18	3853	86504	4.454129289	hutchinsoncycling, oakleybike, worldtriathlon, newbalance, bemurisephoto	alejian #courage		#alejian #courage	AP competition style	Out of the shadows. Feeling grateful to race here in the Cagliari World Series again...5 years ago I didn't think I would. My main thoughts however are with my close friend George. Stay strong brother. I'll send it for you.x #alejian #courage
6	Alex Yee	lisaanyee	Yes	https://www.instagram.com/p/CjDvG4sjYZE/	29.09.2022	Album		3990	21	4011	86557	4.62394064	peugeotuk, joseph.yee_, newbalance, trekraceshop	peugeotuk	peugeotuk	#gifted #alejian #peugeote208	ML life story	Cleaned up pretty well 💪 Thank you @peugeotuk for helping me get around. The freedom and independence over the last year has helped me no end with my race season so far, in a sustainable way. #gifted #alejian #peugeote208
7	Alex Yee	lisaanyee	Yes	https://www.instagram.com/p/CiklYjY65SD/	22.09.2022	Album		4600	10	461	86592	0.532381744	hutchinsoncycling, oakleybike, huublodesign, sramroad, trekraceshop, newbalance	paulhumbert		alejian #scopanuovaspazzabiene	AP athletic expertise	After a small bout of illness it feels so good to be head down towards the next World Series race in.. Cagliari!. 3rd time lucky I hope! ⚡ @paulhumbert French GP Finale! @gpsulhumbert
8	Alex Yee	lisaanyee	Yes	https://www.instagram.com/p/CidPRPhAo6E/	14.09.2022	Album		6357	24	6381	86501	7.376792332	oakley, valencetriathlon, newbalance, hutchinsoncycling, sramroad, trekraceshop, huublodesign, mariomola, newbalancerunning, jeliegaens, fitriathlon, leobergere, juliancini, hugo_matters	valencetriathlon, photo.antoine_		#alejian #speciaishoes	AP competition style	A close battle with the Crème de la crème 🔥I don't take these moments for granted. For me, this is living. A special thanks to @valencetriathlon for your belief which started in 2015 to now. Even when I went to the wrong airport😅 This is for you. #alejian #speciaishoes @photo.antoine_ Gave it my all but it wasn't enough!
9	Georgia Taylor-Brown	georgiatb	Yes	https://www.instagram.com/p/ChuGJDksADi/	28.11.2022	Album		8805	169	8974	56547	15.86998425	floraduffy	floraduffy, tzalferes, wags.photo, janosmschmidt			AP competition style AP sportsmanship	Lost for words & lost in emotions; I'm not sure how I feel right now and I need time to process this long and testing year; but I do know that I'm proud of me 😅 I'm physically, mentally and emotionally drained, so for now, a month of looking after G. ♥ Thanks to everyone in my corner for carrying me through to the very end 😅 you mean everything to me!
10	Georgia Taylor-Brown	georgiatb		https://www.instagram.com/reel/CiUypbR87rs/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link	24.11.2022	Reels	pho3nixlife	2171	21	2192	55911	3.920616535	georgiatb, maccanow, worldtriathlon, brittni_bahnsenvicious13, n2447cam, globaltriathlonnetwork	georgiatb, floraduffy	pho3nixlife		ML relationship effort AP athletic expertise	Congratulations and thank you @floraduffy for pushing me and making me work harder everyday. And also for those post race cuddles 😅😅 I can end this season knowing I gave my absolute all to every race I did! Goodbye 2022 😅 It all comes down to this. @georgiatb v @floraduffy for the Triathlon World Championship title. Time to Rise. 😅 @pho3nixteam
11	Georgia Taylor-Brown	georgiatb	Yes	https://www.instagram.com/reel/Cih0eeCiACes/	24.11.2022	Album		7824	110	7834	55911	13.65384271	floraduffy	floraduffy			AP competition style AP sportsmanship	We haven't raced each other loads this year but it's been a fun battle and it's come all the way down to the final race @floraduffy 🏃😅 Nothing more I can do now than to give my absolute everything tomorrow and enjoy all of it with no regrets 😅 Catch us from 5am UK time us on BBC player & TriathlonLive A week in Dubai 😅
12	Georgia Taylor-Brown	georgiatb	Yes	https://www.instagram.com/reel/CiOV4l0YBe6B/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link	23.11.2022	Reels		1771	12	1783	55911	3.188996798	nas_sc	nas_sc			ML life story	It's the final race week of the 2022 season and we spent a week in Dubai to prep for the heat that's to come 😅 we've been well looked after at @nas_sc and loved our little training camp 😅 #dubai #triathlon #nas

Appendix B.1.
Post Types and Engagement Ratio Percentage.

Male Triathletes: Publications Types and Percentage

	Rank	Name	Publications Amount 1.09.22-31.11.22	Total Sum of Engagment Ratio	Album: Engagement Ratio Sum		Picture: Engagment Ratio Sum		Video: Engagement Ratio Sum		Reels: Engagment Ratio Sum		Collaborated Publications: Engagement Ratio Sum	
1	1	Léo Bergere	22	272,51	211,11	77,47%	11,74	4,31%	0	0,00%	49,64	18,22%	65,08	23,88%
2	2	Alex Yee	13	117,36	87,22	74,32%	17,49	14,90%	0	0,00%	12,65	10,78%	0,8	0,68%
3	3	Hayden Wilde	27	193,9	93,3	48,12%	90,21	46,52%	0	0,00%	5,37	2,77%	2,97	1,53%
4	4	Jelle Geens	20	209,49	102,08	48,73%	49,26	23,51%	0	0,00%	58,15	27,76%	19,79	9,45%
5	5	Vincent Luis	16	83,5	53,86	64,50%	8,76	10,49%	0	0,00%	20,87	24,99%	9,26	11,09%
6	6	Antonio Serrat Seoane	11	116,76	28,11	24,08%	57,52	49,26%	0	0,00%	31,11	26,64%	9,08	7,78%
7	7	Matthew Hauser	13	174,23	156,44	89,79%	0	0,00%	0	0,00%	17,79	10,21%	11,25	6,46%
8	9	Manoel Messias	10	101,14	48,89	48,34%	41,22	40,76%	0	0,00%	11,03	10,91%	33,75	33,37%
9	10	Dorian Coninx	20	158,59	96,46	60,82%	44,8	28,25%	0	0,00%	17,31	10,91%	27,5	17,34%
10	11	Kristian Blummenfelt	42	245,11	182,61	74,50%	30,15	12,30%	0	0,00%	32,33	13,19%	46,88	19,13%
11	12	Vasco Vilaca	27	494,12	278,17	56,30%	23,29	4,71%	0	0,00%	192,65	38,99%	2,69	0,54%
12	16	Jawad Abdelmoula	16	242,08	123,32	50,94%	81,61	33,71%	0	0,00%	37,14	15,34%	43,46	17,95%
13	18	Tom Richard	18	276,37	116,42	42,12%	44,3	16,03%	0	0,00%	115,64	41,84%	0	0,00%
14	19	Michele Sarzilla	17	198,93	116,42	58,52%	82,51	41,48%	0	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	0,00%
15	20	Pierre Le Corre	18	124,34	75,37	60,62%	41,72	33,55%	0	0,00%	7,24	5,82%	3,4	2,73%
16	21	Jonas Schomburg	13	108,83	46,3	42,54%	38,91	35,75%	0	0,00%	23,61	21,69%	0	0,00%
17	22	Roberto Sanchez Mantecon	42	226,53	138,76	61,25%	40,05	17,68%	0	0,00%	43	18,98%	0	0,00%
18	23	Sergio Baxter Cabrera	30	343,8	226,39	65,85%	60,69	17,65%	0	0,00%	56,71	16,50%	10,92	3,18%
19	24	Kenji Nener	14	384,85	384,85	100,00%	0	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	0,00%
20	29	Diego Moya	11	135,2	102,63	75,91%	15,61	11,55%	0	0,00%	16,95	12,54%	0	0,00%
			5 260											

Female Triathletes: Publications Types and Percentage

	Rank	Name	Publications Amount 1.09.22-31.11.22	Total Sum of Engagment Ratio	Album: Engagement Ratio Sum		Picture: Engagment Ratio Sum		Video: Engagement Ratio Sum		Reels: Engagment Ratio Sum		Collaborated Publications: Engagement Ratio Sum	
1	1	Flora Duffy	27	114,91	75,95	66,10%	14,85	12,92%	1,35	1,17%	22,75	19,80%	9,38	8,16%
2	2	Georgia Taylor-Brown	23	203,88	190,78	93,57%	0	0,00%	0	0,00%	13,09	6,42%	9,9	4,86%
3	3	Taylor Spivey	37	319,5	192,01	60,10%	57,59	18,03%	0	0,00%	69,9	21,88%	0	0,00%
4	5	Beth Potter	28	118,9	72,46	60,94%	11,46	9,64%	0	0,00%	34,96	29,40%	9,67	8,13%
5	6	Maya Kingma	17	124,38	45,03	36,20%	69,39	55,79%	0	0,00%	9,95	8,00%	0	0,00%
6	8	Cassandre Beaugrand	29	117,23	59,86	51,06%	57,37	48,94%	0	0,00%	0	0,00%	4,78	4,08%
7	9	Sophie Coldwell	21	190	134,82	70,96%	43,82	23,06%	0	0,00%	11,34	5,97%	0	0,00%
8	10	Leonie Periault	30	233,36	170,69	73,14%	34,44	14,76%	0	0,00%	21,75	9,32%	21,75	9,32%
9	11	Miriam Casillas Garcia	33	370,89	141,5	38,15%	0	0,00%	0	0,00%	229,38	61,85%	208,65	56,26%
10	12	Emma Lombardi	14	299,25	184,97	61,81%	114,28	38,19%	0	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	0,00%
11	14	Kirsten Kasper	10	48,67	38,82	79,76%	3,71	7,62%	0	0,00%	6,14	12,62%	0	0,00%
12	18	Anabel Knoll	17	180,32	30,54	16,94%	131,95	73,18%	0	0,00%	17,83	9,89%	0	0,00%
13	19	Julie Derron	16	146,03	88,27	60,45%	49,91	34,18%	0	0,00%	15,93	10,91%	0	0,00%
14	20	Summer Rappaport	10	28,27	25,57	90,45%	2,69	9,52%	0	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	0,00%
15	21	Alberte Kjær Pedersen	18	297,17	152,46	51,30%	122,08	41,08%	0	0,00%	22,61	7,61%	43,68	14,70%
16	24	Kate Waugh	19	177,4	136,93	77,19%	30,43	17,15%	0	0,00%	10,03	5,65%	43,67	24,62%
17	25	Emy Legault	15	174,74	79,12	45,28%	95,61	54,72%	0	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	0,00%
18	26	Vittoria Lopes	28	98,1	7,11	7,25%	54,98	56,04%	0	0,00%	36	36,70%	0,49	0,50%
19	27	Sian Rainsley	17	184	138,68	75,37%	40,3	21,90%	0	0,00%	5,42	2,95%	0	0,00%
20	28	Bianca Seregni	15	236,9	128,85	54,39%	100,93	42,60%	0	0,00%	7,11	3,00%	8,53	3,60%

Appendix B.2.
Post Codes and Engagement Ratio Percentage.

Male Triathletes: Publications Codes and Percentage										
	Rank	Name	Publications Amount 1.09.22-31.11.22	Total Sum of Engagment Ratio	Athletic Performance: Engagement Ratio		Attractive Appearance: Engagement Ratio		Marketable Lifestyle: Engagement Ratio	
1	1	Léo Bergere	22	272,51	235,92	86,57%	25,84	9,48%	10,74	3,94%
2	2	Alex Yee	13	117,36	76,05	64,80%	8,04	6,85%	33,27	28,35%
3	3	Hayden Wilde	27	193,9	129,11	66,59%	43,63	22,50%	21,15	10,91%
4	4	Jelle Geens	20	209,49	197,99	94,51%	0	0,00%	11,49	5,48%
5	5	Vincent Luis	16	83,5	61,79	74,00%	5,48	6,56%	16,22	19,43%
6	6	Antonio Serrat Seoane	11	116,76	97,68	83,66%	0	0,00%	19,07	16,33%
7	7	Matthew Hauser	13	174,23	152,74	87,67%	0	0,00%	21,49	12,33%
8	9	Manoel Messias	10	101,14	92,99	91,94%	0	0,00%	8,14	8,05%
9	10	Dorian Coninx	20	158,59	132,99	83,86%	6,66	4,20%	18,93	11,94%
10	11	Kristian Blummenfelt	42	245,11	136,15	55,55%	53,57	21,86%	55,37	22,59%
11	12	Vasco Vilaca	27	494,12	380,26	76,96%	64,07	12,97%	49,78	10,07%
12	16	Jawad Abdelmoula	16	242,08	215,8	89,14%	1,11	0,46%	25,16	10,39%
13	18	Tom Richard	18	276,37	233,22	84,39%	25,04	9,06%	18,1	6,55%
14	19	Michele Sarzilla	17	198,93	176,64	88,80%	11,89	5,98%	10,39	5,22%
15	20	Pierre Le Corre	18	124,34	89,48	71,96%	17,59	14,15%	17,26	13,88%
16	21	Jonas Schomburg	13	108,83	93,72	86,12%	7,81	7,18%	7,29	6,70%
17	22	Roberto Sanchez Mantecon	42	226,53	199,93	88,26%	10,02	4,42%	16,57	7,31%
18	23	Sergio Baxter Cabrera	30	343,8	242,65	70,58%	46,06	13,40%	55,08	16,02%
19	24	Kenji Nener	14	384,85	246,3	64,00%	54,25	14,10%	84,29	21,90%
20	29	Diego Moya	11	135,2	125,5	92,83%	0	0,00%	9,69	7,17%

Female Triathletes: Publications Codesand Percentage										
	Rank	Name	Publications Amount 1.09.22-31.11.22	Total Sum of Engagment Ratio	Athletic Performance: Engagement Ratio		Attractive Appearance: Engagement Ratio		Marketable Lifestyle: Engagement Ratio	
1	1	Flora Duffy	27	124,38	96,19	77,34%	0	0,00%	18,71	15,04%
2	2	Georgia Taylor-Brown	23	117,23	113,92	97,18%	0	0,00%	89,95	76,73%
3	3	Taylor Spivey	37	190	205,99	108,42%	84,41	44,43%	29,1	15,32%
4	5	Beth Potter	28	233,36	66,15	28,35%	10,65	4,56%	42,09	18,04%
5	6	Maya Kingma	17	124,38	82,48	66,31%	30,41	24,45%	11,48	9,23%
6	8	Cassandre Beaugrand	29	299,25	69,75	23,31%	28,73	9,60%	18,74	6,26%
7	9	Sophie Coldwell	21	190	109,52	57,64%	4,28	2,25%	76,18	40,09%
8	10	Leonie Periault	30	180,32	203,2	112,69%	13,12	7,28%	17,03	9,44%
9	11	Miriam Casillas García	33	146,03	326,06	223,28%	15,14	10,37%	29,68	20,32%
10	12	Emma Lombardi	14	28,27	191,05	675,80%	81,11	286,91%	27,08	95,79%
11	14	Kirsten Kasper	10	297,17	35,65	12,00%	0	0,00%	13,02	4,38%
12	18	Anabel Knoll	17	177,4	104,14	58,70%	45,35	25,56%	30,83	17,38%
13	19	Julie Derron	16	174,74	142,13	81,34%	6,2	3,55%	5,77	3,30%
14	20	Summer Rappaport	10	98,1	28,2	28,75%	0	0,00%	0,06	0,06%
15	21	Alberte Kjær Pedersen	18	184	224,88	122,22%	13,17	7,16%	59,1	32,12%
16	24	Kate Waugh	19	236,9	132,31	55,85%	11,94	5,04%	33,14	13,99%
17	25	Emy Legault	15	174,74	136,43	78,08%	38,31	21,92%	0	0,00%
18	26	Vittoria Lopes	28	98,1	57,74	58,86%	13,48	13,74%	26,87	27,39%
19	27	Sian Rainsley	17	184	93,01	50,55%	39,54	21,49%	51,84	28,17%
20	28	Bianca Seregni	25	236,9	158,28	66,81%	50,47	21,30%	28,13	11,87%

Appendix C.
Posts with Mentions and Tags.

Rank		Posts Amount 1.09.22-31.11.22	How Many Posts used 'Mentions"	How Many Posts used 'Tags"
1	Léo Bergere	22	19	19
2	Alex Yee	13	12	12
3	Hayden Wilde	27	18	26
4	Jelle Geens	20	19	19
5	Vincent Luis	16	14	15
6	Antonio Serrat Seoane	11	9	11
7	Matthew Hauser	13	10	13
9	Manoel Messias	10	7	9
10	Dorian Coninx	20	13	17
11	Kristian Blummenfelt	42	39	39
12	Vasco Vilaca	27	24	26
16	Jawad Abdelmoula	16	14	16
18	Tom Richard	18	10	14
19	Michele Sarzilla	17	15	17
20	Pierre Le Corre	18	14	11
21	Jonas Schomburg	13	8	11
22	Roberto Sanchez Mantecon	42	29	37
23	Sergio Baxter Cabrera	30	25	29
24	Kenji Nener	14	12	3
29	Diego Moya	11	10	1
	Total:	400	321	345

Rank		Posts Amount 1.09.22-31.11.22	How Many Posts used 'Mentions"	How Many Posts used 'Tags"
1	Flora Duffy	27	19	27
2	Georgia Taylor-Brown	23	18	19
3	Taylor Spivey	37	27	34
5	Beth Potter	28	16	26
6	Maya Kingma	17	27	31
8	Cassandre Beaugrand	29	12	22
9	Sophie Coldwell	21	9	9
10	Leonie Periault	30	11	16
11	Miriam Casillas García	33	22	30
12	Emma Lombardi	14	11	14
14	Kirsten Kasper	10	8	10
18	Anabel Knoll	17	8	14
19	Julie Derron	16	13	16
20	Summer Rappaport	10	13	18
21	Alberte Kjær Pedersen	18	8	16
24	Kate Waugh	19	13	18
25	Emy Legault	15	8	15
26	Vittoria Lopes	28	16	10
27	Sian Rainsley	17	2	13
28	Bianca Seregni	25	5	21
	Total:	434	266	379