



“DIGITAL MARKETING FOR SPORT ORGANIZATIONS”

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Abstract

This research analyzes how the National Olympic Committees are using digital marketing to promote their athletes and their work. It also dives into the use of digital platforms for different purposes aiming to increase the engagement of fans among the sports community and reach more potential partners and sponsors that can generate higher revenue. The scope of this research is based on previous international literature on digital marketing theories. However, to have more accurate and concrete results, the study is based on data analysis from interviews with respective managers from 3 National Olympic Committees, Brazil, Czech and Kosovo, and other analyses of documents of the Digital Strategy that the mentioned counties are using, and as well the research from Association of the National Olympic Committees related to the NOCs experience examples. Ultimately, the paper answers the research questions posed by the author with the intent of the identification of the variety of digital marketing tools used, the strategy which these NOCs follow as well as the best practices that resulted successfully for them.

Keywords: digital marketing, digital strategy, online platform, sport organizations,

Résumé

Cette recherche analyse comment les Comités Nationaux Olympiques utilisent le marketing numérique pour promouvoir leurs athlètes et leur travail. Il plonge également dans l'utilisation des plateformes numériques à différentes fins visant à accroître l'engagement des fans au sein de la communauté sportive et à atteindre davantage de partenaires et sponsors potentiels qui peuvent générer des revenus plus élevés. La portée de cette recherche est basée sur la littérature internationale antérieure sur les théories du marketing numérique. Cependant, pour avoir des résultats plus précis et concrets, l'étude est basée sur l'analyse des données d'entretiens avec les responsables respectifs de 3 Comités Nationaux Olympiques, Brésil, République Tchèque et Kosovo, et d'autres analyses de documents de la Stratégie Numérique que les comités mentionnés utilisent, ainsi que les recherches de l'Association des Comités Nationaux Olympiques concernant les exemples d'expériences des CNO. En fin de compte, l'article répond aux questions de recherche posées par l'auteur dans le but d'identifier la variété d'outils de marketing numérique utilisés, la stratégie suivie par ces CNO ainsi que les meilleures pratiques qui ont abouti avec succès pour eux.

Mots-clés : marketing digitale, stratégie numérique, plateforme en ligne, organisations sportives,

❖ Introduction

In the current time, Digital Marketing is one of the most chosen forms of marketing. A report from Winterberry Group has resulted that 55% of marketing is digital. Nowadays many people use mobile phones to get information, news, trending stuff. Digital marketing helps to catch the customers, as they spend most of their time on mobile phones. Digital marketing lets you reach them while they're using their mobile phones.

Recently, marketers are using digital marketing as a channel to demand their products and services. Digital Marketing is the way of electronic communication with clients, consumers, potential partners or even fans and community. Due to upgrades in technology, the use of digital marketing, social media marketing, and search engine marketing is amplifying quickly, has even entered in sport. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, marketing job demand is set to increase by 10% by 2026—above the average for all careers. Digital marketing requires a new understanding of society behavior. A recent Google/Ipsos MediaCT meta-study showed that search ads drove an average increase of 6.6 percentage points in top-of-mind awareness, from 8.2% to 14.8%—a lift of 80%. So, Digital marketing can increase brand awareness by 80%.

Zimmer (2017) stated that Digital marketing is a strategy that provides an individual or organization the ability to reach clients by establishing innovative practices, combining technology with traditional marketing strategies. At the end, keep in mind that Google claims that for every \$1 spent in their AdWords program, the business will receive \$2 back in revenue, generating a very basic, but very respectable, 200% return on investment (ROI).

❖ Literature Review

Consumers today rely heavily on digital means to research products. Some 77% of customers research a brand online before engaging with it, according to Hub Spot Research, meanwhile, 51% of consumers say they use Google to research products before buying. Since the Internet was borned, has taken place to important changes that have affected people's lives on a social, economic or personal level (Haythornthwaite, 2005; Matthyssens et al., 2008). Not only people have been conditioned by this change, but the business world, which has had to adapt to the new methods of conducting business (Saura et al., 2019). The society has experienced an economical shift, driven by digital technology. One of the areas of the company that has been specifically affected by these changes has been marketing (Lagrosen, 2005). With the rapid advancement of technology in society, the adoption of digital marketing strategy is more important than ever. Armitage (2015) explained that digital stratagem should be the cornerstone of an organization "go to" market strategy. These thoughts are echoed by González Romo, García-Medina & Plaza Romero (2017), which explained that new technologies have forced companies to reconsider marketing strategies. The authors continued to explain that the implementation of technology into marketing would help marketing professionals reach a younger audience that heavily use mobile devices on a regular basis. Therefore companies had to change their way of reaching customers, doing business or using different technological tools that have allowed greater effectiveness and profitability (Martínez-Navalón et al., 2020; Ribeiro-Navarrete et al., 2021). According to Global Industry Analysts research in 2021, the global digital advertising and marketing market was estimated at \$350 billion in 2020 and is projected to reach \$786.2 billion by 2026.

❖ Defining digital marketing

The term “digital marketing” appeared only recently in the world of professional marketing and communication. It refers to the promotion of products and brands among consumers, through the use of all digital media and contact points. Although digital marketing has many similarities with Internet marketing, it goes beyond it, since it frees itself from the Internet’s single point of contact and accesses all so-called “digital media,” including, for example, mobile telephony (SMS or applications) and interactive television, as the communication channel. The term “digital marketing” therefore seeks to bring together all the interactive digital tools at the service of marketers for promoting products and services, while seeking to develop more direct and personalized relationships with consumers. (Flores, L. 2013). “The internet has upended how consumers engage with brands. It is transforming the economics of marketing and making obsolete many of the function’s traditional strategies and structures. For marketers, the old way of doing business is unsustainable (Edelman, 2010).”

Digital marketing is a form of direct marketing which links consumers with sellers electronically using interactive technologies like emails, websites, online forums and newsgroups, interactive television, mobile communications etcetera (Kotler and Armstrong, 2009). It facilitates many-to-many communications due to its high level of connectivity and is usually executed to promote products or services in a timely, relevant, personal and cost-effective manner (Bains et al., 2011). According to Morozan et al. (2009) through digital marketing it is possible to promote products and services using digital distribution channels to reach consumers in a relevant, personal and cost-effective way.

❖ **Why should organizations do it?**

Digital marketing is important because it connects a business with its customers when they are online, & is effective in all industries. It connects businesses with ideal customers when they are on Google through SEO & PPC, on social media with social media marketing, & through email with email marketing (Ballantine, 2018). As of 2022, Google owns 92.48% of the global search market share according to Statista Research Department (2022).

By implementing an Omni channel digital marketing strategy, marketers can collect valuable insights into target audience behaviors while opening the door to new methods of customer engagement. Additionally, companies can expect an increase in retention. Digital marketing continues to evolve. For example, the increasing variety of wearable devices available to consumers affords new opportunities to market to them. Forbes also forecasts that social media will become increasingly conversational in the B2B space, video content will be refined for search engine optimization (SEO) purposes, and email marketing will become even more personalized.

➤ **How digital advertising can benefit the organization**

Today, digital advertising expands beyond banner ads with basic targeting. It's now possible to zero in on prospects based on specific demographics, intent, their stage in the sales funnel, and engagement patterns. These insights can then

be used across display, search engine marketing (SEM) and search engine optimization (SEO), social media, native ads, pay-per-click, retargeting, affiliate, mobile marketing, and more. Digital advertising has created a world in which you can—and must—develop a holistic plan to find and engage with your next customer, then keep in touch with them until they're ready to buy. In 2019, eMarketer projects that U.S. advertisers will spend 54.2% of their ad budgets on digital ads, and by 2023 that figure will reach 66.8%. That's a lot of competition, so you need to know how to make your media spend count.

➤ **Benefits of Digital Marketing**

According to Digital Marketing Institute research in 2021, the potential customers to be found online is a much larger group than can be attracted only locally, by reach a global audience in a way that's cost-effective, scalable and measurable and provides the benefits as follows:

- ☐ The ability to interact with your prospects and learn exactly what they are looking for i.e. get to know your customers better!
- ☐ The ability to reach out to anyone and anywhere as there are no geographical boundaries with digital
- ☐ Target the right audience at the right time - personalization is simpler with digital marketing
- ☐ Communicate with your prospects at every stage of the buying process
- ☐ Save money and reach more customers for less

- Get to know your audience and drive engagement to create brand loyalty. Get some inspiration from the power of customer loyalty schemes.
- Track and monitor responses to your marketing efforts easily and instantly

After all, 4.6 billion people use the internet for many reasons. That's 60% global internet penetration according to Global Overview Report of 2021, so delaying building a presence online is not an effective approach. The best way to ensure success is to promote your business on a global scale and use targeting to attract customers that are interested in your service or product.

❖ **How to do digital marketing?**

Digital marketing is an all-encompassing term that consists of digital channels, such as content marketing, SEO, email marketing, social media marketing, mobile marketing and so on, to create elaborate strategies to reach and connect with prospects and customers.

According to Dr. Jessica Rogers, professor of Southern New Hampshire University, and International Journal of Advanced Research (IJAR), the most popular types of digital marketing are as follows:

1. Website

The website is often the home of digital marketing efforts. Brands and organizations use websites to host content while using other mediums to distribute it. Most of the digital marketing activities will link back to the website, where an action is expected to take place, and the conversions are tracked. For example, the download of a file, booking of a product or a service, and so on.

2. Content Marketing

Content creation is the spine of your entire digital marketing strategy. Whether exists a documented content marketing strategy or not, is needed the creating content to inform, entertain, inspire, or persuade the buyers through other channels. Some of the most common formats of content include text (blog posts), videos, images, infographics, podcasts, slide decks, and ebooks.

3. Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

SEO acts as a jetpack for the content marketing efforts. SEO consists of on-page and off-page activities to boost the website's visibility in search engine result pages (SERPs) for the preferred keywords. Earlier, SEO was primarily text-based, but in recent years voice search has gained prominence as well, which is why the SEO activities need to have a conversational approach.

4. Digital Advertising

Digital advertising is an umbrella term for various online advertising strategies. The typical pricing/bidding strategies for digital advertising are cost-per-click (CPC) and cost-per-mille (CPM), i.e., per thousand impressions. Common formats of digital advertising are search engine marketing (SEM), display advertising, native advertising, social media advertising, and programmatic advertising.

5. Email Marketing

Email marketing is the process of maintaining a database of cold and warm contacts and sending them email alerts about your brand, products and services. It is an effective channel to communicate with the audience on an ongoing basis. Email marketing is useful to build your subscriber base, onboard new customers, retain existing ones, promote discounts and offers, and distribute content.

6. Social Media Marketing

Social media marketing ensure the presence on the platforms that the users are spending the most time on. These include Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Snapchat, and Instagram, where can be distributed content through both – organic and paid channels. Social media has also played a vital role in propagating video marketing and the ephemeral content wave.

It enables two-way communication, fans and followers can interact with the brand on brand's content through likes, comments, direct messages, or by posting on your official pages.

7. Affiliate Marketing

The concept of affiliate marketing is similar to commission-based sales. Organizations provide custom links to their affiliates. Affiliates earn a specific cut/commission every time someone buys through their custom link. Influence marketing could be considered a modern and evolved spin-off of affiliate marketing.

8. Mobile Marketing

The number of smartphone users across the world was 3.5 billion in 2020. To bank on this opportunity, brands connect with their users on their smartphones through mobile apps, emails, mobile-friendly websites, and social media. By connecting with users on the go, brands have been able to optimize their marketing strategies and send timely messages.

9. Online PR

Online Public Relations is a type of earned media. This is when a member of the press (journalist or online publication) mentions a brand through their stories, interviews, and so on. Product reviews by customers, bloggers and Influencers are mentioning the brand or products whether paid or organic also contribute to your online PR.

10. Conversational AI

The rise of technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) have paved the way for more evolved marketing strategies such as conversational AI. As the adoption of voice search, chatbots, and digital assistants becomes prevalent, conversational AI becomes vital to digital marketing.

11. Web Analytics

Web analytics is the practice of collecting, measuring, analyzing, and reporting data. This is commonly tracked through Google Analytics, but websites could also build their analytical tools. The data collected could be quantitative or qualitative. Web analytics helps marketers understand the sources of traffic, what's working and what is not, by the return on investments (ROI), and how they can enhance their digital marketing efforts.

❖ How to measure the success of digital marketing?

According to Flores Laurent, (2013) the digital market is composed of different segments, namely search, display, emailing, affiliation, mobile and social media. The objectives of digital marketing are varied and complementary. Simply, the acquisition of new customers often associated with digital is giving way to more general brand development strategies

involving awareness, the image, and loyalty. Each of the stages of the AIDA model (attention, interest, desire, and action) can be activated through digital marketing. The brand should be situated within its digital ecosystem and construct its “POEM” (Paid, Owned and Earned Media, which serves as a framework for your digital marketing strategies) by deploying its paid, owned and earned media strategy. Knowing more about POEM will help to come up with better marketing strategies

- Measuring without an analytic framework is a pointless exercise: the AIDA model allows the objectives targeted by digital marketing and its effectiveness to be articulated.
- Although heterogeneous in terms of their definitions and measurement systems, “quantitative” and “qualitative” metrics can be used and combined to define key performance indicators (KPIs) for each point of contact (paid, owned, earned) and each stage of the AIDA model.
- Web analytics, advertising metrics, and consumer metrics are three types of metrics to be combined for a performing and operational digital marketing measurement system.

❖ DATA COLLECTION

METHODOLOGY – BENCHMARKING and DOCUMENT ANALYSES

For developing this project, the main focus was to learn from the best practices with a minimum of 3 other NOCs. The selected and applied methodology for this research is Benchmarking, combined with other documents analyses related to digital marketing for sport organizations.

The data collection methodology is qualitative because is needed to focus more on description of their examples and experiences rather than in numerical examples or conclusions. For this research, the information is collected through one to one interviews (via digital platforms such as zoom) with the NOC's specialist of fields for digital marketing and communication. Through the interviews, the aim of this research is to learn from those NOCs the best methods that leads to successfully implementation of digital marketing and the key learning to do so, that can be adapted in other similar sport organizations. Additionally, more researched were needed in terms of document analyses including:

- Digital Strategy Documents of the respective mentioned NOCs
- Official Websites of those organization
- ANOC Social Media Handbook Report with real-life examples from other NOCs such as Jordan, Botswana, Romania and Fiji

The methodology aimed to answer the research questions:

- How to develop a Digital Marketing Strategy and why it is so important?
- What are the digital marketing tools used and the recent trends?
- What are the best practices that resulted successfully for other NOCs and how to evaluate success?

The selected NOCs for benchmarking through this research were NOC Brazil, NOC Czech Republic and NOC Kosovo.

The reason why is referred to explanation below:

1. Firstly, the focus is toward a big organization that leads the field, so other additional research were needed to be done and the result was definitely NOC BRAZIL.

NOC BRAZIL LEADS THE WORLD RANKING OF NOC'S SOCIAL NETWORK ENGAGEMENT (Association of National Olympic Committees, 2022)

According to the ranking assembled by the Association of National Olympic Committees (ANOC), which encompasses 206 countries, the Brazilian Olympic Committee (BOC) was the entity with the most considerable engagement on its digital platforms in May and April 2022. The last time Brazil topped the list for two consecutive months was during the Tokyo Games,

from July to August 2021". Team Brazil currently has 2.2 million followers on Facebook, 1 million on TikTok, 851 thousand on Instagram, 564 thousand on Twitter, and 15.6 thousand subscribers on YouTube.

2. Secondly, the research needed to narrow down to a similar organization in European continent which has almost the same competitions (or Games) and events. Among researches, the second NOC for benchmarking is Czech Republic NOC.

CZECH REPUBLIC NOC IS RANKED AT TOP 10 IN THE WORLD FOR OVERALL PERFORMANCE, ESPECIALLY DURING THE OLYMPIC GAMES. (Association of National Olympic Committees, 2021)

According to the ranking assembled by the Association of National Olympic Committees (ANOC) for the Olympic Games "Tokyo 2020", the Czech Republic had the highest ranking among other NOCs in terms of overall performance, they produced more content on Facebook than any other NOC (692), The Czech Republic produced more videos on YouTube than any other NOC (172), and was listed at top 3 NOCs in the world generating the most video views (9.5m), scoring a country breakdown.

3. Narrowing down in the region, the third selected NOC would have similar characteristics with ours, but higher performance in terms of digital marketing. Without thinking twice, Kosovo is a great example of being a small NOC with a successful digital strategy

Kosovo and Albania speak the same language, so both countries have the same audience behavior and preferences, however the Kosovo population is a bit smaller than Albania. But compared to Albania, Kosovo has 3 Olympic Medal in only two Olympiads since their recognition, and Albania has no Olympic Medal in the 63 years history of its recognition. Furthermore, Kosovo is ranked through different agencies on their researches for performing well in their digital platforms. (Association of National Olympic Committees, 2022)

For benchmarking, the below mentioned persons from respective NOCs have shared their experience through one to one interview via online platforms. The reason why there were chosen, is because they are the main person for leading and implementing the digital marketing strategy in their respective NOCs.

1. NOC Brazil – Mrs. Manoela Penna; Marketing and Communication Director
2. NOC Czech Republic – Mr. Tomáš Houska; Digital Media Manager of the Czech Olympic Team
3. NOC Kosovo – Mr. Kushtrim Krasniqi; Digital Media and Communication Manager

They were asked around 30 open ended question about the organization's digital strategy, the main pillars and the importance of its digital marketing strategy, the different approaches and the main focus, the resources needed, social campaigns and best practices.

❖ DATA ANALYSES

Referring the information provided by the 3 NOCs and the data collected by ANOC Report with examples from NOCs, it's very important to analyze several aspects of digital presence related to an organization, from different perspective, real life examples and experts of fields, as follows:

- **Importance of the Digital Strategy, how to start, who can do it and the frequency of updating it.**

NOC of Brazil, Czech and Kosovo admitted that NOCs must create their own digital strategies, if they want to be successful, to reach their fans and sport community, to engage sponsors and partners and to attract audience or even potential sponsors.

“The Digital presence that started since RIO 2016, was a turn over point for Brazil NOC. NOC hired an agency specialized in digital creation and digital strategy for our online presence. We have been more focused in combining Olympic Values with promoting sport results, dedicating importance to societal goals such as sustainability, gender equality, to keep an eye and promoting woman in sport, and always involving the athletes. Our social media and digital presence was always spreading their voices. This was a turning point for our NOC audience” – said Mrs. Penna.

“We have been developing and improving its social media platforms (reach, content, engagement) over the past 4 years to increase awareness of sport in Jordanian society, to inspire and engage the community, and to promote the Olympic brand. As the main source of online content and sports news, our social media strategy helps deliver national strategy and objectives. It communicates organisational and strategic interventions and messaging to sport stakeholders and audiences. NOC EXPERIENCE – JORDAN”

Analyzing the above mention paragraphs from both NOCs, easily is understandable that the success doesn't come in short time. This means the sustainable success will not come on the first year, or even the high performance. Digital presence is important and should be done by professionals, so even if you don't have experience don't worry, a specialized agency can

do it for your organization. As well, Social media is the pathway to achieve effective results on grow digital engagement with people, to better fulfil NOC's role of developing, promoting, and protecting the Olympic Movement in its territory.

“Digital strategy is based on overall strategy of the organization, its values and goals. It is applied to the digital environment and adapted for each channel” – said Mr. Houska, NOC Czech representative.

The importance of this quote is related with the good understanding of what the digital strategy is made for.

“We have been more focused in combining the promotion of values and NOCs main focus toward sensitive topics for the society such as: woman in sport, sustainability, gender equality in sport etc, by involving the athletes. Our social media platforms spread their voices. This was a turning point for our NOC audience” – emphasized the NOC Brazil representative, Mrs. Manoela Penna; Marketing and Communication Director.

But the data collected from NOCs shows that the strategy is not a paper based regulation which remains unchanged. The Digital Strategy is further developed, respectively in two years cycles approaching next Olympic Games (for Czech) and is updated every year (for Kosovo), and it is reviewed in a big team meetings every 3-6 months (for Brazil). The Strategy update is related even with the new trends for social media. For example, the creation of Tik Tok as the new social media, made the NOC of Brazil and Czech, to review their strategy and even to create specific instructions for it, as the algorithm of growth is not the same as other social media.

The strategy is created by a team of professionals, composed of in-house people (from communication department), externals (professionals) and an outsourced marketing agency (in both cases for Brazil and Czech) but it can be even developed by only one person (social media manager) in small NOC (such as Kosovo).

The overall goal of the strategy is to find a way how to efficiently meet NOC goals, because there are no results without strategy.

But first: define your objectives and make sure to do this before planning to achieve success. Your objectives should relate to your NOCs organisational goals.

“The social media objectives of our NOC are: • increasing the visibility of our athletes and teams in all aspects • showcasing and communicating our activities • publicising our partners/sponsors and their activities • promoting the Olympic Games/Olympic Values

(Olympic Education) • promoting Team Romania’s brand • encouraging a sense of belonging and national pride. – NOC EXPERIENCE ROMANIA”

Those objectives seems to be almost similar for other NOCs, so a good content strategy considers the objectives of your NOC and how best to achieve them through content by providing the foundation of effective communication.

□ **Involvement of NOCs in Digital Marketing, the importance and the most preferred platforms used by them.**

The experience with the new technology and digitalization have shown to the NOCs that digital presence in all platforms is crucial, to reach the highest number of sport fans in sport community, including the most famous platforms such as: Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Twitter, Tik Tok, Website and Youtube (not ranked by importance as they consider them all important) and any other not mentioned as optional, but not necessarily.

“Social media is an integral part of the operational strategy of Botswana’s NOC. It’s a tool by which we communicate with stakeholders and carry out virtual activities, particularly since the ‘new normal’ of COVID-19 era (e.g. our Olympic Day Celebration Challenge). It has proven the most efficient means of two-way communication, enabling wide reach and engagement from a range of stakeholders. By gaining insight into audience interests, a more effective NOC communication strategy can be created. NOC EXPERIENCE – BOTSWANA”

Different social media platforms attract different audiences, so you will need to look at platform-specific insights. Being active in all those different social media platforms means to reach different segmentation of our audience, with different age groups and community focus groups.

“In fact, we don’t just want an average follower, but rather true fans and brand ambassadors so we always take into consideration how they react to our content.” Brazil NOC

The NOCs admitted to have started slowly into social platforms unless they understood well the algorithm of how each platforms works best. NOC Brazil goes even further, and made a categorization as follows:

“Facebook suits best for several type of contents shared, containing mix of photos, videos, links, text ect, and it targets older generation segmentation, Instagram platform attract the youngest segmentation and who are well accepting challenges and experiments on it, with the largest amount of engagements, Twitter suits best for press releases and quick text shared with the audience, Linkedin for more professional audience such as academics, businessmen, different experts, etc, New trends are showing that Tik Tok is the largest growth platform nowadays that it offers extremely high possibilities of profits and engagements. – said Mrs. Penna from NOC Brazil.

As going through the **Digital Communication Strategy and Media House** document of the NOC Czech Republic, easily realized that the channels are categorized into 3 main groups.

“By knowing our self, we know how to behave: • On the field • In our team • In internal and external communication
• On private social media, so we have categorized our channels as follows:

Group 1 named “Social Media” is compounded by our official accounts at the social media platforms :Facebook @olympijskytym; Instagram @olympijskytym; Youtube@olympijskytym; Twitter @olympijskytym; Tik Tok @olympijskytym; Linekdln @olympijskytym

Group 2 is named “Website” and includes the official internet address of the NOC olympijskytym.cz; all the banner system; mailing system and CRM (Customer Relation Management);

And the third Group 3 is named “Innovations” and includes Mobile application, AR filtr, and podcast”.

The most interesting element from such groups is AR filter, which is not seen in other NOCs. Augmented reality (AR) filters are computer-generated effects designed to be superimposed on real-life images. AR filters work with your camera, adding a layer or imagery in the foreground or background of your image. There's a good chance you've come into contact with an AR filter in one way or another on Instagram.

However this is not the same for other smaller NOC who already have created a profile or have less followers (NOC Kosovo) are not performing quite well as Brazil and Czech NOC.

“Our main focus for these years are Facebook, Instagram and Tik Tok. We need to grow more and more Instagram, by posting photos with high quality and interesting video. We have opened Tik Tok account during the pandemic

year 2020 where we are posting only creative videos. This is our strategy, to post videos, which will be creative especially for adults, but this is our main issue as we are facing difficulties in terms of content creation with entertaining behind the scenes and educational videos highlighting the unseen side of sport.” –said Mr. Krasniqi from NOC of Kosovo.

The lifespan of content on different channels varies. There are key tactics you can apply to make sure the content works at its best for as long as possible.

“Our NOC analysed social media use across Botswana and found that Facebook is the most widely used platform. Therefore, we use it to disseminate information in various forms (e.g. posters, live streams, videos) as well to run campaigns such as SMS donation. We are proud to have our account verified (blue tick). We have recently begun engaging on Instagram to reach younger stakeholders and audiences by sharing images of events and challenges. Although not currently on YouTube, we are still exploring its feasibility in regard to our communication objectives.”

NOC EXPERIENCE BOTSWANA

➤ WHAT IT MEANS TO BE ‘VERIFIED’

- The blue tick is one of the most sought-after features on social media which represents being 'verified'. A verified social media account gives credibility to your page and content. This helps with networking and ensuring that your NOC is an industry leader/offers a trusted opinion

□ **The NOCs different approaches on digital platforms and their main focus**

NOC Brazil and NOC Czech admit that they share the same information in digital platforms, but the content needs to be updated differently for the social platforms.

“Today instagram is a key, it grows really fast, is the platforms where we are reaching the biggest audience, but we cant leave aside facebook where we have, 2.5 mln people connected. They complement themselves each other. You need to be on all of them, and understand each platforms characteristics and how it works better” explained Mrs. Penna from NOC Brazil.

By having a look at social media platforms of NOC Brazil, it's obviously they have different approaching.

This is going on the same line with their Digital Strategy Book, where is ***cited “ For content that includes text such as press release the platform that needs to be used is Twitter, for photo contents that share emotions and even***

graphics then should use Instagram, for promotional video that drives engagement, or funny content then go to Tik Tok”.

By checking social platforms of NOC Kosovo, uses Facebook to create albums of photos in different events, which are not shared in other platforms.

Furthermore there are preferred formats on each channel applicable from the three NOCs. The format needs to adapt each platform and the information shared needs to be chosen wisely. Content can vary slightly depending on the target audience that NOCs have on each social media. The most challenging platform for Czech NOC is Tik Tok because requires the coolest video content which drives engagement.

By checking the **Digital Communication Strategy and Media House document** of the NOC Czech Republic, can be found the VIDEO CONTENT CREATION PROCESS as below:

“Stage 1. PREPARATION = CREATIVITY -SCRIPT -STORYBOARD -PRESENTATION –CONSULTATION

Stage 2. IMPLEMENTATION = SHOOTING -EDITING -GRAFICS - ANIMATION –VOICEOVER”

For NOC Brazil, the most difficult is the language which is different so, they have to add more movements and fun on the videos. The boom was during the games, including very famous athletes to catch the attention of the audience.

The NOCs agreed that all digital platforms are important and they complement each other, but the key to success is to understand each platform's characteristics and how it works better for your audience.

□ **Impactful posts, guidelines and pre-planned schedule**

Based on the responses for NOCs, the most impactful posts are the achievements of athletes, medals, big events, video stories with athletes, the real time exclusive content, or even important messages.

“The most impactful are big news, Olympic medals, achievements, important messages addressed to the audience. We have a strategy of posts but we are flexible with the big events. Every year we make an annual plan for the posts and we update it based on ongoing activities and plans. Despite we have the general plan, it’s always a last minute schedule that takes place occasionally.” Said Mrs. Penna.

However, big NOCs are always considering content planning because ensures that content is prepared in advance and they have what to talk about. This means you will employ all the best tactics for optimal performance, and keep your social content consistent in messaging and branding.

As we go further by analyzing the documents, there are guidelines for posts, which are included in their digital bible, so Czech NOC has divided the posts on four types of content:

- Prepared and scheduled content
- Real-time content that reacts to the situation
- Campaigns
- Comprehensive campaigns with pre-planned and real-time content and its own strategy

For small NOC such as Kosovo, the posts are not scheduled. Rather than this, they apply real time posts intentionally scheduled to be published manually for the evening (real time posting not scheduled via other algorithm) when is the peak of the audience online.

☐ **Social campaigns, their success and what would be done differently?**

A social media campaign is a coordinated marketing effort to reinforce or assist with an organization goal using one or more social media platforms. Campaigns differ from everyday social media efforts because of their increased focus, targeting and measurability. All the three NOCs are using social campaigns to raise awareness among society or to address specific messages.

Defining your campaign goals will dictate what type of campaign and which channels to use, and how much marketing is necessary. The most successful campaigns are carefully planned, well-researched, and specific in detail and implementation.

“The main goals of our social media campaigns are to increase sport and brand awareness, and to promote administrative and sporting achievement. Depending on the size of campaign, the planning phase varies from a week to a month. It usually entails setting campaign goals, messages, and a timeline. Scripts, storyboards, interviewees’ communications and logistic arrangements must be prepared. Athletes are central to our sports content and news so the media team works closely with them to ensure the proper delivery and reach of campaigns. We also work with sponsors and partners to increase campaign reach and exposure. Measuring a campaign’s success is dependent on achieving the targets set during the planning phase. In our ‘Meet our Athletes’ campaign, for example, one of the messages we wanted to convey was about the empowerment of women and increasing their sport participation. Multiple social media influencers engaged with and supported this message – by sharing our videos on their accounts. By increased views and engagement with fans, the desired goals of the campaign were achieved.” NOC EXPERIENCE JORDAN

For running a social campaign, first thing to keep in mind for the Czech NOC is the process of creating content and then delivering it to the fans. Czech NOC run the campaigns by using the influencers, athletes, partners, associations and other stakeholders to engage and impact the society. Another successful way to deliver the campaign is using PPC advertising.

“One of our successful campaigns was “Stronger for Life”. A campaign we created in spring 2020 as a replacement for the Olympic campaign (after the Tokyo Olympics were postponed) and aimed at motivating the public to live a healthier lifestyle (exercise, hardening, healthy relationships...). The campaign was successful because it responded to current global events (the covid-19 pandemic), the topics were communicated by relevant personalities, and we effectively delivered content to different target groups through different channels” said Mr. Houska NOC Czech Republic.

For NOC Brazil we can realize through their social accounts and even website, that the most viral and interesting campaign was the one during the pandemic, showing the society that sport is careful with pandemic, the sport values are important to use by population to fight the pandemic. A very simple post was shared among all sport community “Sport united against Covid”. The impact was huge because it was not commercial and everyone was feeling part of it.

“We experienced almost the same with the “White Card campaign” went viral during the pandemic, aiming to raise a white card to support everyone who is touched by the pandemic and wants to fight together the war against it.

We do social campaigns through facebook/ads manager, where you have the opportunity to make deep sponsorship. We do the campaign mainly on Facebook and Instagram, as well as through our media sponsor” said Mr. Krasniqi NOC Kosovo.

☐ **Athletes as Influencers, how to manage it?**

Working with influencers, or influencer marketing, is a type of social media strategy that uses specific individuals to maximize NOC goals. Influencer marketing works because social influencers have built up a high degree of trust with their audiences. They are often seen as go-to, reputable sources of information. When the NOC works with athletes, it is a two-way relationship. While the main aim is to support, advice and guide athletes, they can also support NOC in their efforts to do so. There are various types of influencer. It is very important to view your athlete audience as a type of influencer. Many of the principles that apply to working with influencers also apply to working with athletes.

“We organize trainings, seminars, workshops for athletes to teach them how to effectively use their own social media and how to cooperate with us to multiple reach and their marketing potential” – said Mr. Houska, NOC Czech Republic.

NOC Brazil and Czech always use famous athletes for social media handover, especially Instagram platform for stories.

“This is often done even during Olympic Games, especially for stories. Social Media handover is a good influence for marketing, because is more real among the audience. They see exclusive content, the backstage of training by becoming part of athletes’ routine. Using athlete’s handover is a smart strategy because the athletes are trustier from fans. The only thing that should be careful is choosing wisely the athletes to hand over, among those with good reputation, to avoid any problems” – explained Mrs. Penna, NOC Brazil.

Small NOC as Kosovo, are not using it as they have less athletes and it's easier to manage the content themselves. This is easily notable as soon as we open NOC Kosovo’s profiles in social media or even website.

☐ **Specific strategy for the Olympic Games?**

It has been discussed a lot about digital strategy, but the research is aiming to go further and to understand if NOCs have any specific strategy for the biggest sport event in the world. The 3 NOCs are using their full capacity to increase the visibility and the promotion of the Games through digital platforms by trying different methods that works better for them.

NOC Czech has even a different strategy. ***“In the spotlight is on athletes and their stories. We produced several times more content than usual. Olympic communication is customized half a year before the Olympic Games”***

NOC Brazil operates with a specific digital strategy only for the Olympic Games, created by a very big team composed by the collaboration of the communication department, an outsourced marketing agency and the live streaming team who have been working all the time for the Olympic Games. ***“We started to test the specific Strategy during the Pan-American Games. A former athlete was accredited as media, to work as reporter. The medalist was promoting the Games for us. In Tokyo we had a very impactful female TV presenter, influencer with millions of followers, who has taken this role. She shared really unique content. We are always testing before the Games and during them we have everything in our hands” said Mrs. Penna, NOC Brazil.***

NOC Kosovo on the other side doesn't apply influence marketing, they even do not use athletes social media handover, but rather they maximizes its capacity and they try to do their best with the resources they have, which includes promotional materials with athletes before and during the Games.

□ **Digital NOC TV as the new challenge**

Czech NOC was one of the first NOC that had its TV Channel via online platform such as YouTube since Rio Olympic Games in 2016. For Tokyo Olympic Games, more improvement were done and finally they discovered the new platform and the online TV is called czechteam.tv.

“The czechteam.tv project is based on cooperation with the strongest media house (CNC) in the Czech Republic. We also sell this project to partners and offer them special activations in conjunction with exclusive content from behind the scenes of the Olympic Games. Czech Olympic Team Media House, communication and marketing departments and CNC team are working on the project. –explained Mr. Houska.

More researches on their official page resulted that the TV channel is programmed with a categorization of videos based on the events, importance and year of production. Because of the volume of video content, the Czech team offers an option to filter the information required based on the consumer's need.

NOC Brazil as well has its own TV Channel that streams online in a digital platform, <https://www.canalolimpicodobrasil.com.br/> which can be found easily on their official website. It is a huge work over there and great product come on live stream.

“The NOC TV channel was an old desire for Brazil but we didn’t had the right moment and tool to develop it. The decision came during the pandemic, after a live streaming interview with an online platform. After it, we opened a call in a market and found the supplier with the best business plan an engagement solutions. In less than one years we had over 200 days of live content, 10 million reach, and 300,000 registrations in the platform. This online TV channel seems to be a silent desire from Brazilian sport community. After the immediate success, we started to negotiate with National and International Federations for the rights, even for international event.” –said Mrs. Penna.

Of course the huge amount of content produced is result of a huge investment and a highly dedicated team who work for it every day. The research on their official digital platforms resulted on high number of content produced, several national and international events covered. There is a log in option where authorized people can enter and manage the content, by adding or editing information. The content is divided into section based on time and schedule, but as well on programs, under the same thematic. The information shared is rich in details, with date and exact time, prescription. The sponsor’s area is dedicated and positioned at the bottom of the page, categorized by the type of sponsorship.

“The digital TV is managed by the NOC Brazil communication team, collaborating with the supplier team, in total around 20 persons full time, but for events they are even more freelancers and experts of field. The budget of the digital TV is around 250,000 euro/year. NOC Brazil has the overall control for sponsorship and advertisement for the online TV platform and some sponsorship via Tik Tok platform, so they have almost the budget for it” explained Mrs. Penna.

A deep look on the Czech TV platform shows a dedicated space for sponsors and partners, where they have published advertising content. ***Czechteam.tv operates on its own platform where NOC Czech has absolute control over advertising. The project has its own budget of approximately EUR 650 000/Olympic games.***” explained Mr. Houska.

On the other side, the small NOCs, such as Kosovo does not have TV Channel, they even don't have any plan to do so. ***“It requires big investments in resources, which we don't have but for NOC Kosovo is solved via strong collaboration with the National TV Channel” – said Mr. Krasniqi.***

□ **NOC activation on YouTube channel and it's importance.**

The NOC of Brazil, Czech Republic and Kosovo expressed that they have their dedicated channel on the YouTube platform. The platform is used firstly as the NOC Channel from NOC Czech but now it has become more for young generation but still generating revenue.

NOC Brazil is not investing in content creation for YouTube platform anymore. ***“We are working with our channel in YouTube in the different way, actually we are using it more or less as a digital archive. We use YouTube to post long videos. However we are not really active compared with other social platforms”*** explained Mrs. Penna.

The archive option is used even by NOC Czech and NOC Kosovo. By checking the YouTube channel of the NOC Kosovo, we notice that they have created the first post on May 2017, and have 135 videos in total and 286 subscribes. The official YouTube channel of NOC Brazil tell us that they have bigger number of followers despite there are less video posted. But differently from Brazil and Kosovo, Czech NOC is very active on YouTube due to attractive content and a high number of videos posted.

On the other side, the NOC Kosovo is investing in content creation for YouTube. “We use this platform to post 3-5 videos per month. We consider YouTube as important to upload high quality video, which can be downloaded from other national media channels. It’s a good opportunity for the archive as well - expressed Mr. Krasniqi.

However the NOC channel on YouTube, still not generating revenue for small NOCs.

☐ **NOC Mobile App for smartphone?**

Application on the smartphones is the new trend that has been developed thanks to the technology improvement. Some NOC are considering it an effective way to be next to the fans, but some of them have made some deep research for pros and cons of having a NOC App.

NOC Brazil has considered creating an App for smartphones, but as soon as they understood the costs for having it, they evaluated better not investing for it. ***“We have considered the App but we found it not useful. As well we made a survey for population and the apps resulted not really preferable for Brazilians, they mostly use the app for bank or taxi, the most utilizing ones. Having an App is a big investments with not really impact”*** – explained Mrs. Penna.

So, Brazil quitted from the NOC app idea, the Czech NOC is not interested in creating an App and they have a good reason, related with the strong position they have with digital platforms. ***“We are really powerful on other online platforms and social media so people don’t have to download an App which will occupy lot of space on the smartphones. Furthermore it can lost the importance and attention of other social accounts, as they are our main source of information”*** expressed Mr. Houska.

On the other side, NOC Kosovo doesn’t have an App but they are considering to have one in the upcoming 2 years for the next Olympics. The reason why is that they want to be as near as possible with their audience and to have the content as any times in their smartphones. ***“We want to give the chance to navigate easily through different events and lots of information. Mobile apps allow users to have easy, functional access to information, products, services and processes that they need in real-time and are optimized for hands on interaction”*** said Mr. Krasniqi.

☐ **NOC Sponsors promotion via digital platforms and success evaluation**

Digital marketing is related closely with the promotion or even attraction of potential partners, sponsors or supporters. Three NOCs which are part of this research, have a dedicated strategy for the promotion of its sponsor on their social media

digital platforms. For sponsored content, it's monitored the reach and level of fan engagement. They have a set reach per month for each sponsor. NOCs include the athletes on such advertisements that drives engagement and are useful for the athletes.

“Each sponsor has its own rubric, which is branded by sponsor. The rubric is related to the activity of the sponsor - e.g. we create tailor-made articles for Toyota about athletes travelling in the car, the official brewery is connected with top moments in which they celebrate Czech successes together, etc. The content varies slightly on each social network and this is due to the overall social media strategy (some use videos, others use photos, etc.).” said Mr. Houska.

Through the research on their document of Digital Strategy, in general Czech NOC creates several types of sponsored content - videos, photos, stories, articles, web banners. For some partners they even have a call to action included. For creating this strategy, Czech NOC involves surveying partners and finding out what is important to each sponsor - length and intensity of logo exposure, connection to a specific topic, content format, call to action, etc.

Czech NOC strategy includes detailed rules for sponsored content and they never share purely commercial content. There are also have rules for content shared directly from sponsors' social media. ***“The sponsor presentation process is about intensive communication between Media House and a dedicated person in the marketing department who is in***

charge of sponsor presentation on social media and has this as their agenda. If a given sponsor has ambassadors, it's natural, automatic and significantly easier. If a sponsor doesn't have ambassadors, the NOC Czech have set rules for branding content so that branded content is clearly separate from content with athletes. This is because neither NOC nor its sponsors own the marketing rights of such athletes”.

NOC Brazil promotes a lot its sponsors via digital platforms, all depends on what the sponsors wants, but the key is to make sense. For NOC Brazil the content is king, so always have this in mind and don't lose focus.

“Needs to be legitimate, otherwise the fans will not be engage. We include the athletes on such advertisements that are useful for the athletes, for example a sponsor who is a provider for recovery equipment and materials, so every time the athletes use them, they are promoted because the athletes are really using them. Sometimes the sponsor is a Service Company, so needs to find a way to promote it with athletes. If the sponsor is running any big campaign, we share it”

For the success evaluation, Brazil NOC gives to the sponsors the insights, interactions, engagements so they evaluate success itself. ***“There are tons of data, so we collect them and share with sponsors. However the success is different for different persons. For example: Telecom Company as a sponsor during the Games were very happy that they didn't received any complain in social media networks during that period of the Games. Everyone was***

happy, Brazil was having medals, no complains in their posts, so success is not always more money generated but it depends on sponsor goals.

By going deep in research on Brazil NOC's digital TV channel, the results shows that the sponsors advertises are not only in social media platforms, but even on digital online TV platform where Brazil NOC has even bigger audience, so it's managed the exposure of sponsors based on their status and the moneys received by them. Regarding the guidelines for sponsorships, Brazil NOC is facing lot of cases where the sponsors go directly to the athletes, as the market for that category of sponsors is closed by NOC.

“Because we are facing issues with sponsorship and athletes, we have set rules to guide. We have tightened the rules, but however it's important to keep a good relationship with athletes and sponsors. For this purpose, Brazil NOC organizes several workshops to explain each party what they can do and what can't, so they don't face any issue at all during the Games.” explained Mrs. Penna.

On the other side, small NOC doesn't generate big revenues from sponsorship. However they apply digital marketing forms to promote and attract new sponsors. On those publishing, small NOCs include athletes as well as a great opportunities to increase the exposure or the visibility among fans. ***“To maximize the sponsor visibility, except the banner line at the end of the main page, sponsors are listed in the menu under NOC Subcategory. The categorization of them is based on benefits of agreement: gold, top and proud partner. We try to thank sponsors***

every one or two months in Facebook and Instagram. But usually we are promoting them with including their logos in the various designs with athletes and for the activities” said Mr. Krasniqi.

□ **NOC Website’s importance and it’s structure**

Website is the most important digital way of communicating officially and is “home” for all the brands or organizations. In 2020, the Czech NOC has built a brand new website. Since NOC serves a large number of stakeholders, they had to take that into account as well their needs. ***“Czech NOC website is a combination of an institutional and a fan site and it was our biggest challenge to reconcile this. When creating the categories and subcategories for the information, we drew on the experience of the previous website, i.e. from knowing how people behaved on the site, what they searched for and at the same time what was needed to convey to people the most” – said Mr. Houska.***

But more research was needed, so the deep look on their website showed that in general, the website categories are divided as follows: News, sports categories (games, sports, and athletes), video, coaches, education, projects and Czech NOC (institutional part). For a new special projects, campaigns or activities, they create a microsite and add a new category.

Czech NOC has created sites for all sports and athletes, so at the moment a fan searches for that athlete, the link to the site pops up among the first ones, increasing the website traffic.

By researching on the Brazil NOC website, it resulted that the website includes all the information about the good governance, management, and ethics. All the official documents are posted, even the history is there. They have posted a lot of information but it is easy to navigate through the page. All articles have a label of category so it is not difficult to know what is about the news. The website is automatically connected with other social platforms, linked to the main page. There is a dedicated space for photos, and they are named by folders which contains the even name. The end of the main page includes a wall of Olympic medalists with photos and their total number of medals. To finish the page, they have added a map, which demonstrates the performance of the NOC Brazil around the world. ***“The website is always difficult because the general public is not searching in the website anymore, so it’s not the first choice for information. Rather than website, the audience search for social media platforms. In this perspective, the website has a very important role regarding the transparency for the NOC. Website has to include all the information about the organization. It’s very important for the news agencies because there is the first place to go for information. The website is run by the communication team in terms of content and IT specialists’ assistance. – explained Mrs. Penna.*”**

On the other side, the website of Kosovo NOC is simpler. By researching into it, resulted that the website contains general information about the organization, sports, membered federations, athletes, medals, news sector and organization. They have paid attention that website is mobile-friendly.

□ **NOC resources for doing digital marketing**

Regarding the resources for digital marketing, the NOC Czech and NOC Brazil have created a dedicated department for communication and marketing, while smaller NOC such as Kosovo has a dedicated person only for digital platforms.

“At Czech NOC, we have an internal Media House that collaborates also with a pool of external freelancers and field experts. Normally we have 4 full-time paid staff, 3 part-time paid staff and pool of video makers and graphics designers. For the period of the Olympic Games, the team is at least doubled”

Czech NOC do not have volunteers for social media intentionally, because volunteers can't work properly without being trained and without experience, as the digital marketing is important and doesn't tolerate mistakes, as it costs a lot in terms of audience.

NOC Brazil is even bigger, the key of success was the decision to have people with hybrid skills, by training them to be more efficient for social media and digital platforms. ***“The overall department including marketing is composed by 33 persons, who have a close collaboration with each other, for the Olympic year. For daily works, normally only for communication there are 16 people, half dedicated for digital strategy. The multi skills team is our key to success” explained Mrs. Penna.***

However, NOC Brazil have collaborated with an outsourced agency leading the digital strategy as they are more updated with the new trends globally so they could bring ideas, set new tools and methodology, but the NOC communication team is crucial as they are more informed about athletes, sports in details and this was a very good combination.

In other side, NOC Kosovo is a small NOC which have showed that even one people can make difference and lead the organization toward success when he is trained to work properly and he is dedicated only to digital platforms. Sometimes, during the busy period of the year he is collaborating with marketing manager for the other platforms that requires more time and dedication for the content creation. However, they collaborate with an external graphic designer and video editor, because there are some specific skills that are very important for doing digital.

□ The budget for doing digital and ways of funding it

This research have shown that there is no specific amount of budget required for digital marketing, which can start even by 5.000 – 10.000 € per year such as the case of NOC Kosovo that includes designs, video editing and recording. The sponsored content on social media come with less expenses, around 500 € per year.

Of course, the more investment you have for digital marketing the higher is the return. The NOC Czech has a dedicated budget for doing digital and it is approximately 140.000 €. ***“We have own budget and it is around 10% of total budget. For the period of the Olympic Games, we are selling additional activation options within our Internet TV (czechteam.tv), which brings us additional revenue”*** –explained Mr. Houska.

Around 200,000 euro per year (agency + sponsors posts) is the investment of NOC Brazil for digital marketing, now you can imagine why they are on top of the world. ***“The NOC is not refunded so the funds are coming from Sport Lottery. For Sponsors posts, they can’t use that funds so an extra sponsor budget is coming from the NOC. Recently we have interact with social media sponsors. They have their community and we bring them together via our community”*** – said Mrs. Penna.

□ **Key factors that leads to success**

It's very interesting to know that 3 NOCs have different responses regarding the key factors that leads them to success, which means that all of the below mentioned can bring you on top, just by knowing how to use them properly.

For the Brazil NOC, Digital Strategy is key. The AI (artificial intelligence) and knowing how to learn data is crucial when dealing with internet as there are unlimited resource of information to collect. ***“If you know how to read the data, will lead you to success, but you have to add passion to it, because we are talking about sport. Use passion to communicate, use of brand ambassadors and influencers to increase the engagement.”*** – explained Mrs. Penna.

For the Czech NOC, the key to success is having the dedicated people and the budget. ***“The digital platforms are priority for the organization, and the they serve to organization by returning the investment with trust of audience, new partners, new sponsorship, more fans engagement and better ranking among others”***- expressed Mr. Houska.

Small NOC with a small staff who can't have a department, at least have a dedicated personnel who is passionate. Despite the very low budget, they are focused on achieving their annual goals. ***“The key success factors for NOC Kosovo is hardworking, by being present there 24/7, being fast on sharing the information and providing best quality among the content.”*** said Mr. Krasniqi.

□ **Evaluation of success**

Big NOCs such as NOC of Czech and Brazil applies measurements of the posted content frequently, depending on the metrics. The measures are on a daily, weekly and monthly basis and based on the data analysis, they plan the content for next months. Success evaluation is based on reach, engagement, metrics how the media is running over the topics & content and also the satisfaction of all stakeholders (sponsors, athletes, national federations, sport organizations etc.)

“Brazil NOC applies daily checks for monitoring what is going on with the content posted. Every month, other checks are applied to have an overall measure on KPI, dashboard, so they can adjust the posts for the next months. Success evaluation is through measuring the KPI and fans engagement” expressed Mrs. Penna.

The most difficult time is after the Games, when they faced decreased number of followers but Brazil NOC has learned how to handle it, and has turned to successful point.

Success evaluation for smaller NOC such as Kosovo NOC is via fans engagements. Furthermore, on their Digital Strategy success is prescribed: **“Successful posts: Posting with short text, creative ideas, keeping the frequency and high quality photos. Unsuccessful: Posting long text description, bad quality of the images, text in the photos, posting every 20 or 30 minutes.**

□ NOCs best practice and challenges facing recently

Czech NOC best practice is to set up the digital strategy and a dedicated team by considering all possibilities according to budget. ***“It’s crucial to engage the athletes in both creating and distribution of the content digitally, to involve sponsors and other stakeholders as they all will multiple the reach of the NOC content. Aside it, always have to look what works outside of sport that can be related with culture, show business, etc.”*** said Mr. Houska.

For Brazil NOC, everyone is different and can’t be generalized, but the key for success is to be smart enough to read the information to have. The digital road is rich enough with information to know what is performing well, and what is not. ***“Using SEO tools and Google Analytics data will tell you what keywords and topics consumers in your industry are searching for. This will lead to create content that people are searching for. As well is very important to improve the online presence with Search engine optimization (SEO). With successful SEO, can expand your reach to new audiences and online communities dramatically”*** explained Mrs. Penna.

It’s very interesting to know how Brazil NOC decide to sponsor a post, which is considered one of the best practice as well. Before sponsoring, a check is needed to control what is going on at digital platforms. If a post is performing well,

more money are added to increase that successful impact. It's highly recommended to be able to adjust the digital strategy based on what information you have from social media, to be updated with new trends, to do benchmarking, to see what the new platforms are (example the Tik Tok account).

Brazil NOC recommendations on their Digital Strategy Document are “ ***Best practices to ensure successful post is via using the athletes emotions, hidden stories, backstage acts, trainings, being connected with the fans, showing the hard work, and addressing messages***” .

Best practice for Kosovo NOC is keeping the content short and attractive to grow the reach, to attract the peak of audience in the insights, using features of each platforms and updating the website, by making sure that the website is mobile-friendly. ***“Engaging with your followers is important in building a community and feeling more personable, by liking and responding to comments, create polls and quizzes, and post content that starts”*** said Mr. Krasniqi.

❖ Results:

Based on the findings of this research after benchmarking with 3 different NOCs that represents a unique audience, and documents analyses, there are quite interesting and very valuable results that can be used by other NOCs as a great example of the best practices.

□ NOCs must create their own digital strategies, if they want to be successful, to reach their fans and sport community, to engage sponsors and partners and to attract audience. Digital strategy is based on overall strategy of the organization, its values and it is applied to the digital environment by being adapted for each platform. The successful strategy is created by a team of professionals, composed of in-house people (from communication department), externals (professionals) and an outsourced marketing agency. Digital Marketing is the key to success on digital platforms and attracting potential sponsors or partners.

□ Digital presence in all platforms is crucial, to reach the highest number of sport fans in sport community, including the most famous platforms such as: Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Twitter, Tik Tok, Website and Youtube. Being active in all those different social media platforms means to reach different segmentation of our audience, with different age groups and community focus groups. New trends are showing that Tik Tok is the largest growth platform nowadays that it

offers extremely high possibilities of profits and engagements. Digital platforms key to success is to understand each platforms characteristics by checking metrics and insights and how it works better for your audience, by sharing same information through different ways and content.

□ For running a social campaign is digital platforms, first thing to keep in mind is the process of creating content and then delivering it to the fans by using the influencers, athletes, partners, associations and other stakeholders to engage and impact the society. Don't forget to use PPC advertising, but be smart to sponsor only successful posts. The hugest impact is among noncommercial campaigns because everyone feels part of it.

□ Always use famous athletes for social media platforms handover, especially during big events activate athletes for Instagram stories. Using athlete's handover is a smart strategy because the athletes are trustier from fans. Before doing so, be sure to train the athletes via seminars, meetings, and workshop to teach them how to effectively use their own social. Social Media handover is a good influence for marketing, because is more real among the audience, share only exclusive content, the backstage of training, athletes' routine. The only thing that should be careful is choosing wisely the athletes to hand over, among those with good reputation, to avoid any problems.

□ For biggest events, use the full capacity to increase the visibility and the promotion of the Games through digital platforms. Try to make a collaboration with influencer with millions of followers, who can take the role of reporter by sharing a really unique content. Always test it before the Olympic Games and during them they have everything in hands.

□ NOC TV online is a very good investment for big NOCs who have the capacity to invest on it. Make sure to have a dedicated department that collaborates with the service provider for the live streaming and the revenues will be on top. Be careful to ensure the TV right with National and International Federations.

□ Big NOCs are not investing in content creation for YouTube platform anymore as they are using it as a great place for an online archive platform, but small NOCs see YouTube as a TV channel with potential to grow.

□ The NOC Mobile Apps is not really preferable for big NOCs as they don't find it utilized as they are really powerful on other online platforms. Apps will occupy lot of space on the smartphones, and furthermore it can lost the importance and attention of other social accounts, as they are the main source of information.

□ It's very interesting to see that the three interviewed NOCs, despite their size, they have already created their account on Tik Tok platform. The creation started during the pandemic and was tested during the Olympic Games of Tokyo 2020. NOCs have addressed a specific strategy only for Tik Tok, as they found it difficult to pass the message via creative videos, and speaking their native language makes them to put more effort in adding more movements and fun on the videos. The boom was during the games, including very famous athletes to catch the attention of the audience.

□ NOCs have a dedicated strategy for the promotion of their sponsor on their social media digital platforms. Each sponsor has its own rubric, which is branded by sponsor. Creating this strategy, NOCs involved surveying partners and finding out what was important to each sponsor - length and intensity of logo exposure, connection to a specific topic, content format, call to action, etc. In general, NOCs create several types of sponsored content - videos, photos, stories, articles, web banners. For some partners they even have a call to action included.

□ NOCs are facing a lot of cases where the sponsors go directly to the athletes, so they have to tighten the rules. A best practice includes the organization of several workshops to explain each party what they can do and what can't, so they don't face any issue at all during the Games.

□ The NOCs website needs to update immediately, and the best practice indicates a combination of an institutional and a fan site, considered as the biggest challenge. In this perspective, the website has a very important role regarding the transparency for the NOCs. Website has to include all the information about the good governance, management, and ethics. All the official documents are posted, even the history is there.

□ The most impactful posts are big news, Olympic medals, athlete's achievements, important messages addressed to the audience. Always keep a strategy of posts following a schedule but add flexibility with the big events occurring at the same time.

□ Apply metrics on a daily, weekly and monthly basis and based on them, plan the content for next months. Success evaluation is based on KPI, reach, engagement, and metrics, satisfaction of all stakeholders. The most difficult time is after the Games, when NOCs face decreased number of followers learn how to handle it, and has turned to successful point via planned content.

□ The digital road is rich enough with information to know what is performing well, and what is not. Using SEO tools and Google Analytics data will tell you what keywords and topics consumers in your industry are searching for. This will lead to create content that people are searching for.

□ Use the emotions, hidden stories, backstage, trainings, being connected with the fans, showing the hard work, and addressing messages. Engaging with your followers is important in building a community, by liking and responding to comments, create polls and quizzes, and post content that starts.

□ Key to Success:

1. The AI (artificial intelligence) and knowing how to learn data is crucial but you have to add passion to it, because we are talking about sport.
2. Use passion to communicate, use of brand ambassadors and influencers to increase the fans engagement.
3. The multi skills team, composed by an outsourced agency leading the digital strategy as they are more updated with the new trends, the NOC communication team is crucial as they are more informed about athletes, sports in details and combination with a pool of external freelancers and field experts, video makers and graphics designers.

4. Having a dedicated budget. The digital platforms have to be priority for the organizations as they will returning the investment with trust of audience, new partners, new sponsorship, more fans engagement and better ranking among others. Of course, the more investment you have for digital marketing the higher is the return. Around 200,000 euro per year is the investment of NOC Brazil for digital marketing and around 140.000 Euro is the investment of NOC Czech for digital marketing.

5. Being fast on sharing the information and providing best quality among the content.

Recommendations

Priority	Recommendation	Actions	Lead	Resources	Timescale s	Critical Success Factors
1	Create and Implement a Digital Marketing Strategy	<p>1. Identify best practices from other similar organizations (e.g. NOCs)</p> <p>2. Find an outsourced marketing agency to prepare the strategy</p> <p>3. Create a draft strategy and update it with findings by focus groups interviews with key stakeholders</p> <p>4. Propose a budget to implement and frequently update the strategy</p> <p>5. Present it to the Executive Board and get agreement of the</p>	<p>1.Secretary General</p> <p>2.Marketing and Communication Director</p> <p>3.Specialized ad-hock team of experts</p>	<p>Time: 6 months working hours to get the draft strategy before start implementing it.</p> <p>Financial: Expenses to cover the meetings with key stakeholders and a budget to cover the outsourced agency.</p> <p>Human Resources: People with adequate skills to work with and trained to do the implementing</p>	<p>Before March 2023 to finish the Strategy creation</p> <p>Start testing the strategy during European Games 2023 and other events of the year</p> <p>Ready to achieve the peak before Paris 2024 Olympics</p>	<p>Commitment of the Executive Board and members to a dedicated budget for digital marketing</p> <p>Integrating the digital strategy into the strategic plan</p> <p>Medals and good results of the athletes</p> <p>Taking into consideration</p>

		General Assembly to implement it.		Equipment: To use the adequate devices and high resolution cameras for high quality images and videos		n the key stakeholders needs
2	Revamping the website and all digital accounts profile (create new accounts)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Use the data collected by focus groups interview (for preparing the strategy) to implement them for structuring the information provided to the official website 2. Build a new website with well-structured information and transparency 3. Consider to have a dedicated TV 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.Secretary General 2. Marketing and Communication Director 3.Specialized ad-hock team of experts 	<p>Time: 3- 6 months working hours to get the well-structured information for the website</p> <p>1 year to launch the NOC channel into the website</p> <p>Financial: A budget to cover the outsourced agency for renovating the website design and information</p> <p>A budget to launch NOC channel on website</p>	<p>Before January 2023 to finish the digital accounts profile updates</p> <p>Start testing the social media channels during EYOF 2023 in January</p> <p>Before June 2023 to have launched</p>	<p>Commitment of the Executive Board and members to dedicate a budget for website, NOC channel and social media accounts</p> <p>Implementin g the digital marketing strategy into website and social media accounts</p>

		<p>channel part of the official website, as a dedicated space for video contents</p> <p>4. Re-organize the social media accounts based on the strategy guidelines (and open all the necessary accounts in other platforms such as Tik-Tok or Spotify etc.)</p> <p>5. Present it to the Executive Board and get agreement of the General Assembly to implement it.</p>		<p>Human Resources:</p> <p>People with adequate skills to work with and trained to do the implementing</p> <p>People to run the NOC channel</p>	<p>the new website and start testing it during European Games 2023</p> <p>To have an NOC Channel implemented on website before Paris 2024</p>	<p>Content from athletes</p> <p>Taking into consideration the key stakeholders needs</p> <p>Having a team of professionals to run the NOC Channel</p> <p>Training of a dedicated person for the Social Media accounts</p>
		1. Identify best practices from other similar organizations	1.Secretary General	Time: 1 year	Before the end of 2023 to have	Commitment of the Executive

3	Create Digital Archives	<p>(e.g. NOCs) that's suits the organization</p> <p>2. Find a dedicated digital storage online (e.g.. YouTube, Vimeo etc.) and offline on external memories (hard disc or server) to keep all the necessarily content</p> <p>3. Find a dedicated agency to convert the actual archives to digital one</p> <p>3.Prepare a detailed plan for the future content</p> <p>4.Present it to the Executive Board and get agreement of the General Assembly to implement it.</p>	<p>2.Marketing and Communicati on Director</p> <p>3.Specialized agency</p>	<p>(to collect all the recently published data and convert the old archives digitally)</p> <p>Financial: Expenses to cover the meetings with key stakeholders and a budget to cover the outsourced agency.</p> <p>Human Resources: People with adequate skills to work with and trained to do the implementing</p> <p>Equipment: Finding the best equipment to storage the materials</p>	<p>finish the converting of materials</p> <p>Before March 2023 to have finish the plan for the future content storage</p> <p>Before Paris 2024 to finish the converting and start publishing digital archives</p>	<p>Board and members to a dedicated budget for digital archives</p> <p>Integrating the digital archives plan into the digital marketing plan</p> <p>Content such as Medals and good results of the athletes</p> <p>Dedicating an exclusive space for sponsors or partners.</p>
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