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EXECUTIVE MASTERS IN SPORTS ORGANISATION MANAGEMENT



MEMOS XXIV

2021-2022

**ENHANCING THE CROATIAN OLYMPIC COMMITTEE COOPERATION
WITH YOUNG ATHLETES THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA**

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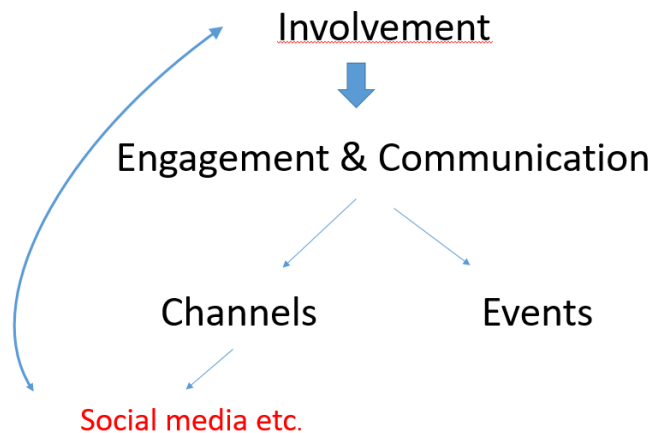
1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Presentation of the problem

The main problem is that the Croatian Olympic Committee is facing a lack of involvement of young athletes engaged in the existing athletes' programs. Young athletes also mention this lack of involvement and communication with the NOC (marketing, campaigns...). Currently, the NOC is in direct contact only with young athletes who participate in multisport events like Youth Olympic Games and European Youth Olympic Festival.

The context of research is shown as a lap starts and ends with the involvement of the young athletes. Engagement and communication are achievable through different channels and events. In this case, the chosen way is social media. Using social media and working with young athletes on the social media content it is possible to come to the start - involvement.

Figure 1: The context of research



1.2. Research aim

The main aim of the research is to analyze how to enhance the involvement of young athletes throughout our activities on social media at large. It will help how a relationship with young athletes may be effective in working online activations and activities for promoting sports, campaigns with sponsors and how to build relationships with a young audience.

This project could help the Croatian Olympic Committee (NOC of Croatia) to realize the importance of cooperation with young athletes on digital campaigns and how social media content could be improved to increase followers in the youth generation.

By the obtained results the NOC of Croatia may improve cooperation with athletes on social media during the whole year, not only during the multi-sports events like Youth Olympic Games, European Youth Olympic Festivals etc. The research's results will help change the communication strategies of social media channels to reach more young followers by improving collaboration with young athletes.

There are facts observed by this research to achieve objectives:

- to build a relationship with young athletes to feel them as a part of the Olympic Family
- to be part of the promotion of sport delivered by NOC
- to enhance cooperation to harmonize their different marketing engagements
- to attract young followers on social media

This paper will be tested three hypotheses:

H1: Young athletes like to be involved in social media campaigns and share NOC's content

H2: Young athletes are proud to be engaged in their sports promotion on social media

H3: Young athletes would benefit from the NOC marketing cooperation on social media to harmonize the different marketing engagements (national sports federation, personnel and the NOC)

These hypotheses will be confirmed or disproved after the research of the project.

1.3. Research questions

The main research question of this project is:

- ***How may the Croatian Olympic Committee enhance cooperation with young athletes through social media?***

Regarding the main issue, the following questions were considered:

- *What is the trend on social media used by young athletes?*

- *What kind of content is relevant on social media to build a relationship with young athletes?*
- *What kind of NOC's interactions are expected by young athletes on social media?*
- *What kind of NOC cooperation do young athletes expect for the purpose of self-promotion and promotion of their sport?*

1.4. Target group

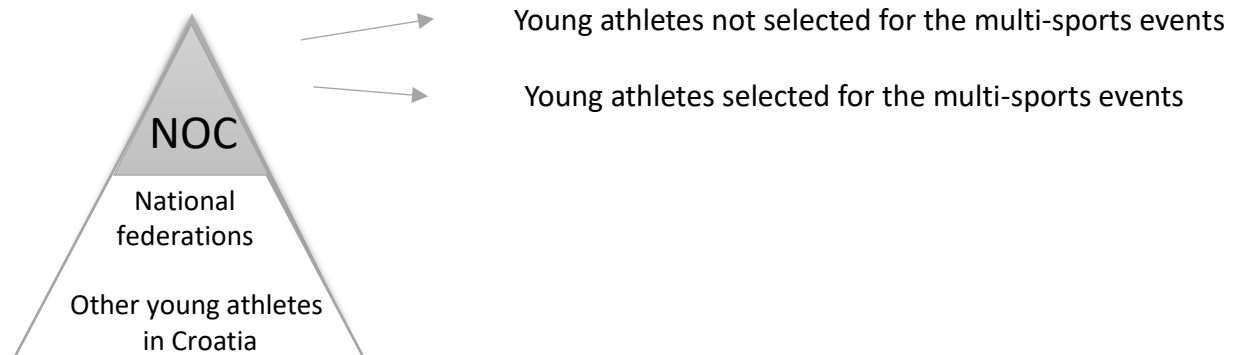
The target group of this project is Croatian youth athletes up to 18 years old, born between 2004 – 2008, who are part of the NOC's programs: those selected for the multi-sports events and those who are not selected for multi-sports events but are users of the NOC's programs. The chosen target group includes Generation Z.

In this case, multi-sports events are Youth Olympic Games (YOG, summer and winter) and European Youth Olympic Festivals (EYOF, summer and winter editions) include approximately 80 athletes yearly. The number of athletes depends on how many Games are scheduled or postponed because of the pandemic.

In the second group are athletes with successful international sports achievements who are beneficiaries of grants, nutrition, medical controls, sports equipment etc. Six different programs were created by the NOC of Croatia that supports young athletes by financing their needs in sport. In those programs are more than 300 athletes per year (Croatian Olympic Committee, June 2022). The number is changing because of new users or the transition to another program, for example, the Olympic program.

Generally, all athletes who are covered by the NOC of Croatia are also part of national sports federations and clubs. Bellow in the graphic (Chart 1) is shown all Croatian youth athletes. The group from the top is the focus group of this project.

Chart 1: The structure of the young athletes in Croatia



1.5. About the Croatian Olympic Committee

Although the Olympic movement in Croatia began much earlier, the International Olympic Committee adopted Croatia into its family 30 years ago, after establishing the independent Republic of Croatia.

The Croatian Olympic Committee (the NOC of Croatia or the NOC) is a non-profit and the highest non-government sports organization that gathers 113 members: forty-four national sports federations of Olympic sports and forty of non-Olympic sports, 21 local organizations and 10 other organizations of sports interests (Croatian Olympic Committee, June 2022,). The headquarter of the Croatian Olympic Committee is in the hall of Dom sportova, Zagreb.

After systematization of workplaces in April of 2022, the new Organizational structure of Croatian Olympic Committee is shown below.

Chart 2: Organizational structure of the Croatian Olympic Committee



The organization structure includes the General Assembly, President and Secretary General who is in charge of the NOC's employees in eight departments, two centers – for sports rights and athletes' careers, Office for athletes' status and an Internal audit. Today, the NOC of Croatia has around sixty employees. There is also Council with 23 members (June 2021) and eight commissions (March 2021), Ethics Committees, Supervisory board, four committees - summer Olympics, winter Olympics, non-Olympics and local sport's community, and Athletes' Commission.

The NOC of Croatia has two public authorities: determining the status of athletes by category and issuing an excerpt from the official records of medalists at the Olympic Games and world championships in Olympic sports and disciplines to exercise the right to monetary compensation for medalists.

The mission of the NOC of Croatia is to promote sport respecting moral and ethical principles in conformity with the Olympic Charter, to create and represent top sports achievements of Croatian athletes abroad, to take care of sports development on national level.

The main job of the NOC of Croatia is to promote the Olympic movement and protect Olympic property in the country. There are three core businesses focused on by the NOC: the Olympic program, the National sports federations program, and the Local sports program. However, the intention of the NOC of Croatia is to promote young athletes and let them participate in the multisport events same as promoting sports to the young generation as a crucial part of a healthy life. For this reason, many programs were created by the NOC to support young athletes through scholarships, paid nutrition, equipment etc. The newest program called Olympic hopes will further support young perspective athletes in their careers in addition to regular programs. At the local level, there are also programs for young athletes as well as to support women in sports.

Croatian athletes have won 52 Olympic medals since their first participation under the Croatian national flag: 41 at the Summer and 11 at the Winter Olympic Games (including Olympic Games Beijing 2022). It shows the great success of Croatia considering the size of the country (56 594 km²) and a population of 3,8 million people (2021). Accordingly, Croatian athletes are the best ambassadors of the country in the world.

1.5.1 Social media analysis of Croatian Olympic Committee

Last few years, the NOC of Croatia recognized the importance of social media and decided to open a job position focused on that area (2019). From there, the focus on digital activities and communications are higher and higher. The job position's title is Communications Officer, but the person is mainly employed to work on social media networks. The International relations and corporate communications department have two more people who work/help in that area, the director of the Department and a Spokesman. If necessary, external associates are engaged in creating graphic designs, recording, and photographing events, especially for big projects.

Today, the NOC of Croatia is active on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, and from November 2021 on LinkedIn too.

Currently, the NOC corporates mostly with the Olympians or Olympic Medalists and athletes selected for multi-sports events (not only youth) such as European Games, Mediterranean Games etc. These athletes are invited to events, work on sponsors' activities or cooperate on the social media content. Cooperation with young athletes is mainly based only during the multi-sports events such as YOG and EYOF. Clubs and national sports federations are in contact with them the whole year.

1.5.1.1. Audience and content

The oldest network which the NOC of Croatia uses and the channel with the biggest number of followers is the Facebook page. As mentioned before, the last created page is on LinkedIn with the smallest number of followers. The dominant channel is Instagram focused on younger followers like the Twitter profile used by the NOC more for protocol and journalism purposes. Also, there is more interest in the YouTube channel which is in slow growth but has interesting and quality content compared to a few years ago.

Table 1: Followers of Croatian Olympic Committee's social media (March 2022)

| Social Media Network | No. of followers / subscribers |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Facebook | 35.382 |
| Instagram | 14.000 |
| Twitter | 2.033 |
| YouTube | 324 |
| LinkedIn | 110 |

The biggest audience of the Facebook page is aged 25-34 with 29,6%, but there is no information about followers younger than 18 years. It is noted that the most active audience is older than 44. The following audience is aged 35-44 (20,4%), and ages between 18-24 and 45-54 are around 17 % in the third place. On Instagram in the last 90 days, the same audience like on Facebook aged 25-34 is the majority with 32,3 % but very close with 30 % is the audience between 18-24. The percentage of followers ages 13-17 is 7,2 in fifth place in size. Twitter and LinkedIn are used mainly for politics and journalism. The data about followers' ages are not available but is supposed to be the older generation. There is no information about subscribers' ages on the YouTube Channel. As LinkedIn is the platform for the business community

followers' ages are not shown, but there are data about Follower Demographics such as location, job function, company size etc. All data are from April 2022.

The content seeks to adapt to the audience and the platform, and all post's types like videos, reels, stories, photos, albums and carousels, gifs etc.

The example of the Facebook post (on Instagram was published the same material) which includes young athlete during the multi-sport events is shown in Picture 1. This post also shows cooperation with young athletes but until now only with young athletes during multi-sport events.

Picture 1: - Facebook post: the medalist at EYOF in Vuokatti 2022 - Dante Bečić, snowboard



(Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/HrvatskiOlimpijskiOdbor/photos/5014848151928793>)

2. KNOWLEDGE REVIEW

The existing literature review are helpful to understand how the social media is affecting to the non-profit sports organizations more precisely national Olympic committees with the focus on the young athletes.

To get oversight of theory relating to social media in the sports industry but also usage of social media in the youth population, the literature review covered the following areas: social media in sport industry, social media in Olympic Movement and social media and generation Z (new channels and trends).

2.1. Social Media in sport

The definition of social media is described briefly as media created to be shared freely (Belch & Belch, 2011) but more specific was described by Ryan (2017) as *„umbrella term for web-based software and services that allow users to come together online and exchange, discuss, communicate and participate in any form of social interaction “*. That actions include sharing photos, videos, questionnaires, rating services or products, etc. (Ryan 2017) social media is a part of our lives and for that reason it is extremely important in the sports industry.

As is written by Smith & Stewart (2015) sport fans search for extra content even during events on their smartphones. It is not enough to watch the game on the television or streaming live, even fans who are on the game participate on social media with sharing photos, videos or commenting posts of players, clubs, or sports organizations. Therefore, the success of the sports marketing is constant adaptation to the new challenges on the social media which are now part of the standard marketing methods. (Smith & Stewart, 2015)

The role of social networks in users' lives changes over time. Motivating digital users to engage with social media helps entertainment. Considering that they are available everywhere every time for engagement social media platforms are evolve into entertainment hubs. For that reason, users today could choose content to consume. The article calls “5 Things to Know About Sport on Social Media” describes some of the biggest trends in sports consumption on social media. One of them is live video because it is accessible content everywhere from smart devices and allows brands to connect with consumers in new and exciting ways. Here is a problem for broadcasters and sponsors who need to offer an immersive digital experience and interest the audience to watch television. On the other hand, social media builds a community by providing new opportunities to keep fans engaged online following monetization. As mentioned in the article sports content is the most prosperous on Facebook and YouTube because of watching live

streaming and conversation of consumers around the world. Also, Facebook and YouTube increasingly cooperate with leagues for streaming popular sports events on their platforms. There is an increase in long-term viewing on social media that contributes enriched experience of watching live sports. Exclusive content is the key to success on social media in the sports industry. A good example is Instagram where fans can communicate and socialize. Instagram lives and stories enable athletes, clubs, and sponsors to be in touch directly with followers by creating behind the scenes content and providing exclusivity. That type of content *„is particularly important to younger consumers; 16-24 sports fans are 30% more likely than the average sports fan to say exclusive content or services is a purchase driver.* “They want to see unique content in the natural environment of their favorite athlete or club that is not available on TV. On TikTok are two interesting audience groups that could be a lure for the sports industry: Generation Z and females. *„On top of this, the ratio of males and females who say they use social media for sports news and content is also becoming more balanced over time.* “The reason for that is the popularization of female sports and gender balance in sports consumption. Lastly, the article mentioned that consumers from the Middle East and Africa are very active on social media and like to follow sports content that the sports industry utilizes with many new collaborations for that market. (GWI, 2019)

Concluding, the acceptance of social networks as a way of communication in sports happened quickly with all stakeholders: athletes, sports organizations, sponsors, and journalists. Therefore, social networks also influenced the organization of sports events, and the organizers also embraced this new trend.

As Naraine and Parent (2016) note, the PRI strategy says that national governing bodies tend to use social media for promoting competitors, events, and athletes; reporting on real-time scores, results, and news updates; and informing by sharing multi-media (e.g., videos and images) or redirecting readers to a webpage or other social media platform. This strategy probably could be applied on social media for major sports events. (Sport event governance Milena M. Parent and Michael L. Naraine)

The following chapter will be described how social media influenced the Olympic Movement and the Olympic Games.

2.1.1. Social Media in the Olympic Movement

In the last ten years, social media influenced our lives and sports fans' habits too. The sports audience used to watch the events on television, but social networks have changed that, not entirely. The transition in the digital world of social media has occurred with the advent of websites. The massive change was

during the preparations of the Torino 2006 Olympic Games when the large public, including spectators, created their content and published it in real-time (illegally). All these digital changes affected the Olympic movement and the communication's transformation with the possibility to engage through social media with a new audience. Four years later during the Olympic Games in Vancouver 2010, there were two growths of digital media related to Web 2.0 and social media tools: user-generated content and the growth of citizen journalism.

The Olympics stakeholders are essential for producing the content on social media, such as athletes, officials, sponsors, staff, spectators, media etc. The reason is explained as *the possibility of engaging audiences differently, rather than just treating them as spectators or viewers of content*. However, this allows the audience to illegally use or re-purpose materials and post on social media that may be considered a breach of intellectual property laws. (Miah, 2017)

During the Olympic Games the main problem related to the social media is filming because of the broadcasters' rights. To explain the rules, the IOC creates guidelines for all stakeholders with rules for recording and publishing on digital media. Firstly, was IOC's 2008 blogging guidelines concerned with brand protection and unauthorized usage of video footage from Olympic sports, but their main turning point was in 2012: *guidelines began by emphasizing the importance of social-media freedom*.

For obvious reasons and understanding of the new digital communication, the IOC encourages activity on social media of the Olympic Games participants and accredited persons, with a note: any such postings, blogs or tweets should be in a first-person, diary-type format and should not be in the role of a journalist - i.e. they must not report on competition or comment on the activities of other participants or accredited persons, or disclose any information which is confidential or private in relation to any other person or organization. A tweet is regarded in this respect as a short blog and the same guidelines are in effect, again, in first-person, diary-type format. (International Olympic Committee 2012)

With the growing importance of social media, the Rio de Janeiro 2016 guidelines were modified from „blogging guidelines “to „the social and digital media guidelines “. The revised guidelines had more focus on privacy areas in the Olympic Village and sharing audio and video content that is more restricted on personal use. These IOC's guidelines are the point to the importance of social media in communications in the world of sports. The IOC updates the social media guidelines relating to accredited persons for each Olympic Games. It has been noted that the IOC appreciates that athletes are role models on social media during the Games rather than to promote individual interests during that period. In the end, the IOC has

increased its income during the digital media evolution and social media positive effects on television viewing. (Milah 2017).

Concluding this chapter, here are some impressive numbers about digital and social media for Olympic Games in London, Rio de Janeiro and PyeongChang, as is written by Parent and Ruetsch (2021):

- London 2012 saw 150 million tweets and 116 million Facebook posts/comments about the Games (Hutchinson, 2016).
- Rio 2016 saw 187 million tweets, 75 billion impressions, and 1.5 billion Facebook interactions by 277 million people, as well as 916 million Instagram interactions (Hutchinson, 2016). It also included 7 billion video views of official content across the various social media platforms and 85 hours of live virtual reality (VR) coverage (International Olympic Committee, 2016a).
- PyeongChang 2018 saw 670 million digital users watching 3.20 billion videos covering 16.2 billion minutes or 97,041 hours; and 300 million users on social media platforms watched over 1.6 billion videos covering 3 billion minutes (International Olympic Committee, 2018c, 2018d).

2.2. Social Media and Generation Z

The focus of this project is on Generation Z, also called Gen Z or iGen. The first population in history that has never known a world without the Internet and born and rise into the social media era. In general, Generation Z is defined as a group of people born between 1997 and 2012. That generation is also known as zoomers, gen Z or iGen. (June 2021). Depending on sources may be the difference in the defined ages but generally cited as the mid-to-late 1990s to the early 2010s. (Wikipedia)

The users' preferences of social media depend on generation. For example, Facebook and YouTube prefer Baby boomers, Generation X and Millennials. Baby boomers' favour LinkedIn too and show the fastest growth in WhatsApp and Instagram usage. In terms of percent of usage Millennials dominate many platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp. As opposed to that Generation Z favour using Instagram and Snapchat, but in terms of percent of usage, they dominate on YouTube. (PostBeyond, 2019; World Economic Forum, 2019)

As a result of growing up in the online world, Generation Z surpasses Millennials in daily activity on social media spending 2 hours and 55 minutes. (World Economic Forum, 2019) Gen Z uses social media primarily for entertainment and fun not even to connect with friends. They are mostly moving away from platforms

such as Facebook to the platforms like Instagram and YouTube – more multimedia sites. Accordingly, to that, Gen Z could call YouTube generation because more use YouTube on the mobile devices than watch the television. Also, they are truly connected to their mobile devices and social media. (PostBeyond, 2019)

On the other hand, this generation is more careful and realistic than Millennials about sharing their content on social media. They think more about privacy on social media and that is why Gen Z prefers Instagram stories and Snapchat - direct and time-limited sharing. (PostBeyond, 2019)

Written by Seemiller and Grace (2019), Gen Z has lived life through not just one screen and use for entertainment a variety of these devices.

In the end, the interesting fact is that Gen Z likes visuals, and they consume most of the content on YouTube, Instagram, and Snapchat. Their average attention is only about 8 seconds which is challenging for contents producers. (PostBeyond, 2019)

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To answer questions and confirm given hypotheses was used the deductive approach. The reason for the chosen method is the predefined idea that ends with the given recommendations and specific conclusion as top-down reasoning.

In this project, Exploratory Research is used for the research type approach because it gives a picture of the current situation following the recommendations that will be useful at the end of the project. In this way, it is possible to analyze the current state of social media and cooperation with young athletes, but also give recommendations to the NOC on how to improve it.

The rationale for this approach relates to the project's goals, questions, and sub-questions that are mentioned in the chapter about the purpose of the research.

This research has aspects of qualitative data collected by multiple techniques because it gives a better understanding of athletes' perspectives about the NOC's social media and their potential cooperation.

3.1. Data collection and instruments

The purpose of data collection, the following tools shown in the Table 2 are used:

- Interviews
- Bench-learning
- SWOT analysis

The data obtained from this research are helpful to identify athletes' perceptions and get answers for potential building relationships with young athletes on social media. Related to this topic there are no previous studies or literature in Croatia, so all methods are helpful to get a deeper understanding of athletes' meanings. The data collection process is shown below in Table 2.

Table 2: Data collection process

| Research questions | Data method | Target group | Data to be collected |
|--------------------|----------------|--|---|
| All | Interviews | 2 selected young athletes for EYOF Vuokatti 2022 Selected young athlete fo EYOF Banska Bystrica 2022 Athlete/judoka competed at EYOF Baku 2018, YOG Buenos Aires 2018, and Mediterranean Games Oran 2022 Coordinator for multi-sports events (NOC of Croatia) and the XX Memosian | Expectations of young athletes Potential cooperations Motivation and satisfaction |
| All | Bench-learning | 3 MEMOS XIV Peers (Canada, Czech Republic, Austria) MEMOS professor of the Communication and Social media module The XXI Memosian (Slovenia) | Recommendations Backgrounds |
| | SWOT analysis | | Real situation Potential cooperations |

1. Interviews

The primary method for data collection is interviews with athletes to understand how young athletes see the social media channels of the Croatian Olympic Committee and what should be changed. Interviews were conducted with the two Croatian athletes who participated in the European Youth Olympic Festival (EYOF) in Vuokatti 2022 and Youth Olympic Games (YOG) 2020 in Lausanne. They are cross-country skiers born in 2004. The one interviewed athlete is a judoka who competed in the last summer editions of YOG

and EYOF because of the pandemic: Buenos Aires 2018 and Baku 2019. She is 20 years old. Furthermore, the XX Memosian from Croatian Olympic Committee was also interviewed who works with young athletes as a Coordinator for multi-sports events. In the end, the interview was carried out with a very perspective 16 years old athlete who will compete at EYOF Banska Bystrica 2022 in July. Interviews were conducted by phone and in person by phone and in person.

2. Bench-learning

The second part of the primary research is bench-learning provided to three MEMOS XXIV Peers from Austria (national federation), Canada (NOC), and the Czech Republic (NOC) and to the XXI Memosian from Slovenia (NOC), who is a responsible person for Public Relations and works with young athletes. Four project's questions were also sent to the MEMOS professor who held Communication and Social Media module and works as Senior Communication Manager for Sport Event Denmark - National Danish sports event organization.

3. SWOT analysis

The SWOT analysis gives the overall picture of strengths and opportunities that can be exploited to enhance cooperation with young athletes through social media. This analysis also pointed out weaknesses and threats that need to be reduced and avoided to reach the project's aim. The SWOT is a useful tool to realize internal (strengths and weaknesses) and external (opportunities and threats) organization factors related to the main topic. It has been sourced from the interviews and the bench-learning.

4. DATA COLLECTION AND RESULTS

4.1. Interviews

Interviews with Croatian young athletes and with the XX Memosian and a colleague from the NOC help to get an overall picture of the NOC's social media in their opinion. For that reason, four athletes were interviewed: two from cross-country skiing (**Tena Hadžić** and **Petar Perušić**) and one from judo (**Ana Viktorija Puljiz**). They are professionals with international achievements and participated in Youth Olympic Games and European Youth Olympic Festivals. Another interviewed athlete is from athletics (**Jana Koščak**). She is 16 years old and will compete at the EYOF Banska Bystrica 2022 in July. The last one is a colleague from the NOC of Croatia (**Petra Nosso**) who works as a Coordinator for multi-sports events. She is the Memosian from the generation XX (2016-2017).

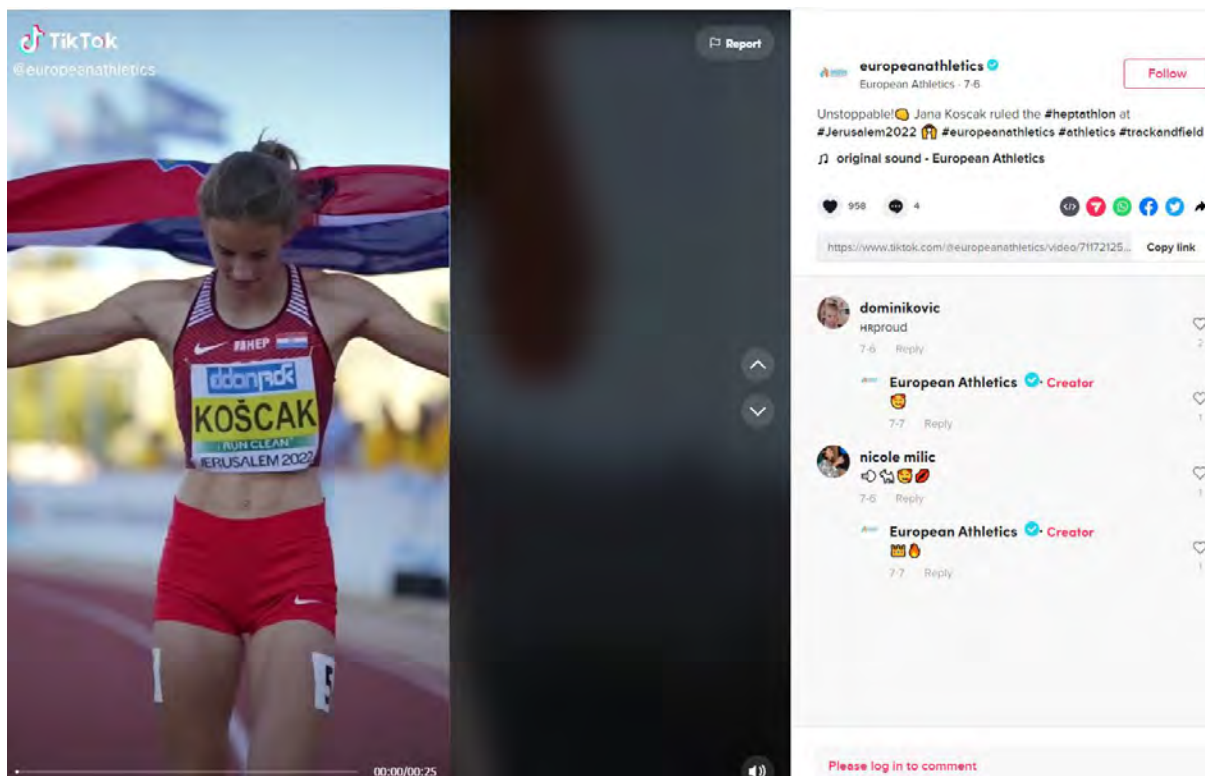
Athletes from cross-country competed at YOG Lausanne 2020 and 2 years later at EYOF in Vuokatti. They are satisfied with their appearance on the NOC social media and like to be involved in online campaigns before events. Both are active users of Instagram but one of them uses TikTok instead other used Twitter before. For both, Facebook is the traditional channel and they do not use it anymore. The interviewed athlete, who also competed in Beijing 2022, Tena Hadžić said that she likes when the NOC follows different sports events as well as multi-sport events (for example Mediterranean Games). In her opinion, *“the NOC’s social media is also an informative channel where followers could see about less popular sports or athletes or learn something new from educational posts.”* Also, it is mentioned that the NOC may think to have a bilingual description in Croatian and English, but it is not obligatory. More short videos and reels will help to reach more young followers in both opinions. The second interviewed athlete, Petar Perušić follows the NOC’s Instagram profile because he can find the results and achievements of Croatian athletes on an international level. He likes when *“the NOC congratulates the athletes for their sports success”*. He points up that all of them had the same appearance on social media of the NOC during the YOG Lausanne 2020 and EYOF Vuokatti 2022. They are ready to cooperate with the NOC and potential sponsors and will make time for creating content. For them, it is nice to be part of the Croatian Olympic Family as well as on social media channels.

The interviewed judoka competed in 2018 at the last editions of the summer Youth Olympic Games (Buenos Aires) and European Youth Olympic Festival (Baku). She is a user of Instagram and YouTube and is not active on Facebook anymore. TikTok is interesting for her, but she does not have time for one more social media. She likes short videos and reels and spends the most time on food, sport, and travel content. On Instagram follows other judokas and athletes, clubs, the Croatian Judo Federation, the Olympics, the Croatian Olympic Committee, and food influencers. When she was part of the Croatian delegation in Baku and Buenos Aires, she was involved in social media. As a medalist, she needed to give interviews and make content with a responsible person. Appearance on the NOC social media was one more confirmation of her success and she was proud to be presented on social media of the NOC. In her opinion, *“the popularization of other sports and athletes, instead of football are very important on social media of the NOC”*. Furthermore, the popularization of less popular sports will reach new sponsors at the beginning of an athlete’s career. At that point, she is ready to cooperate with the NOC, but she was ready in 2018 too. It is not necessarily for the NOC to open a new channel such as TikTok but to produce more reels on Instagram about sports, competitions, and medal ceremonies... Instagram has an advantage because can be an informative channel but also for fun than TikTok which is only for entertaining and informal content. In the national federation and club, she does not have any obligations related to social media even posting

on her profile. Sometimes, she needs to record some videos for social media of the national federation but not too many. She appreciates the cooperation that she had with the NOC and hopes to continue working in the future.

The youngest interviewed athlete Jana Koščak has very perspective results in athletics and will be part of the Croatian delegation at EYOF 2022 in July. She is using Instagram and YouTube to watch sports videos. On Facebook, she is not active anymore. As a young athlete, she does not have sponsorships yet, but she is ready for cooperation. There are no obligations to the Croatian Athletics Federation regarding sponsors and social media, only to send photos from competitions with a significant result. In her opinion, social media is important to promote athletics and athletes. She follows the Croatian Olympic Committee on Instagram and likes to see the sports results of athletes in other sports. Her family and friends always share the content with her appearance on Instagram and Facebook. She would be happy to cooperate on social media with the NOC related to the EYOF in Banska Bystrica. The European Athletics shared a video about her on TikTok and she likes it (Picture 2). As a good example on TikTok, she mentioned the World Athletics profile which are interesting and entertaining videos of athletes and has 3.4 million followers (July 2022) and 127.7 million likes.

Picture 2: TikTok video of the European Athletics - Petra Koščak



(TikTok: https://www.tiktok.com/@europeanathletics/video/7117212516912024838?is_copy_url=1&is_from_webapp=v1)

All four interviewed athletes use WhatsApp for daily communication with family members, friends, coaches, and other athletes but also Snapchat with friends of their ages. Three of them said Instagram is the most popular, and one said it is TikTok. The other three even do not have created profiles or do not spend a lot of time on TikTok (monthly use). In their opinion, Instagram reels are the most popular content. It is noticed that they have a perception of the NOC as a professional organization which could be the reason why they did not give a lot of suggestions for changing content on social media. They are satisfied with the existing content and do not have an idea what is the limit of the NOC to have entertaining and creative content on social media.

In the following text is described the last interview with the XX Memosian (Petra Nosso) and a Coordinator for multi-sports events in the NOC of Croatia. She is not an expert in social media, but she is a responsible person to have a Press Attaché or Media Representative in the Croatian delegation during multi-sports events. She understood the importance of social media and the appearance of young athletes on the NOC channels. Working with young athletes last ten years, she perceived that *“young athletes like to be posted and shared on social media. It is important for their family and friends too.”* In her opinion, creating content with them will reach more young followers in more informal and creative ways. If it is needed, she helps with taking photos or recording videos for social media and knows how crucial is to be first, fast and interesting during events. Although she is not an expert in this area, she supports and encourages the cooperation of the NOC with young athletes on social media. Also, she advocates a way that a young person manages the social media networks of the NOC and collaborates directly with young athletes to have engaging and exclusive content.

4.2. Bench-learning

The Bench-learning is the most common method to see how other parties work and what could be learnt and improved by this research.

The Olympic Movement is a specific area and the best way to learn is from each other. The Olympic motto “Faster, Higher, Stronger – Together” explains that working alone is impossible. For this reason, colleagues from national Olympic committees or national federations help to collect data related to the topic. To be more specific, three MEMOS XXIV Peers (Austria, Canada, Czech Republic), the Memosian (Slovenia) and MEMOS professor were asked four project’s questions:

- *What is the trend on social media used by young athletes?*
- *What kind of content is relevant on social media to build a relationship with young athletes?*

- *What kind of the NOC's interactions are expected by young athletes on social media?*
- *What kind of NOC cooperation do young athletes expect for the purpose of self-promotion and promotion of their sport?*

Their answers and opinions are in the continuation of this text.

This part includes answers received from the MEMOS XXIV Peer who works with young athletes for the Austrian Sailing Federation as the Youth Program Coordinator. In their case, young athletes are very active and involved in the TikTok challenges like the Push-Up to Plank into Handstand Challenge. For them, it is essential to produce fun content including videos where someone does crazy things but sometimes also informative content but not too much. They expect the NOC's social media content is easily consumable. For example, questions on stories where they can vote rather than questions where they have to comment themselves. They prefer things where they can just quickly click on the option or watch action videos. For self-promotion and promotion of their sport, they expect to provide an opportunity to post videos on the NOC or national federations (NF) channels that present the team. They think this would lead to their increasing reach and lead to a higher reach of the NF's social media as well. The Austrian Sailing Federation does not have a collaboration with young athletes for social media yet. There are plans to create a database where athletes can upload content and then could be shared it on NF's channels.

In the second part, the MEMOS XXIV Peer from the Canadian Olympic Committee who works as Manager of the Athlete Marketing and Olympian Legacy has answered the same questions. Answers are very similar especially to the most popular social media for young athletes. Again, TikTok is the leader but for Canadian young athletes, Instagram is popular too. To build a relationship with them, there are crucial Instagram Stories such as Takeovers from young 2020-2022 Olympians (one day in a life of the athletes) or reposting their content on the Team Canada Instagram account. The social media platforms of the NOC of Canada mainly target Fans at all stage of their life but sharing Olympians' stories, results and tricks are when they get the most engagements. But the NOC uses social media to elevate the voice of their young Olympians and to share their journey. It could be around important topics such as Safe sport, Doping, and Human rights or make focus on their athletics Journey. The Canadian Olympic Committee has contracts which cover cooperation on social media only with Olympians and if there are under 18, they have their parental signature. If content needs to be created with athletes still active, the NOC of Canada works with Athletes/National sports organizations/agents at the same time. All are part of securing the athletes. If re-sharing existing content, approval is always required. To resume, the type of engagement will dictate

the engagement process and agreement conditions needs and with who the engagement is, with active or retired athletes, agent or no agents involved, with a commercial partner or not.

The Czech Olympic Committee is known as a good example in the Olympic Movement for producing and creating digital content. The Head of the Media House and Marketing Manager (MEMOS XXIV Peer) gave answers related to social media and young athletes. For their young athletes, TikTok is the most popular because of its video content. They are happy to share their content, tagging and work with them as the NOC. Also, the NOC organize a seminary about content production and sponsorship on social media. Many young Czech athletes use Instagram or TikTok as a "customer care line" for communication with the NOC instead of emails or any official channels. For example, during the pandemic

before Beijing and Tokyo, many athletes wrote to the NOC social media team, about how to fill the papers about the Covid-19 test or similar. Concluded, they use social media to get information from the NOC.

In terms of self-promotion, respondents are not sure, but they make a lot of promotion of young athletes on social media. For example, every World or European championship's medals are communicated and congratulated on social media. The Media House uses a unique hashtag #budoucnostsportu which means #futurestars. Already, the Media House of the NOC of the Czech Republic does not have any strategy for cooperation with young athletes on social media. If there are some talented and interesting athletes also successful on social media, the Media House will work with them.

In the case of the Slovenian Olympic Committee, the most popular social media for young athletes is also TikTok. They prefer short videos (8 seconds) and stories on Instagram. In their opinion, the most attractive activation with them are stories behind the scenes, their sports story, and results that parents and friends could follow. The NOC of Slovenia does not have specific cooperation with young athletes yet, but it is perceived that young athletes want their help for exposure on social media (for example by tagging) which could reach more sponsors' cooperation.

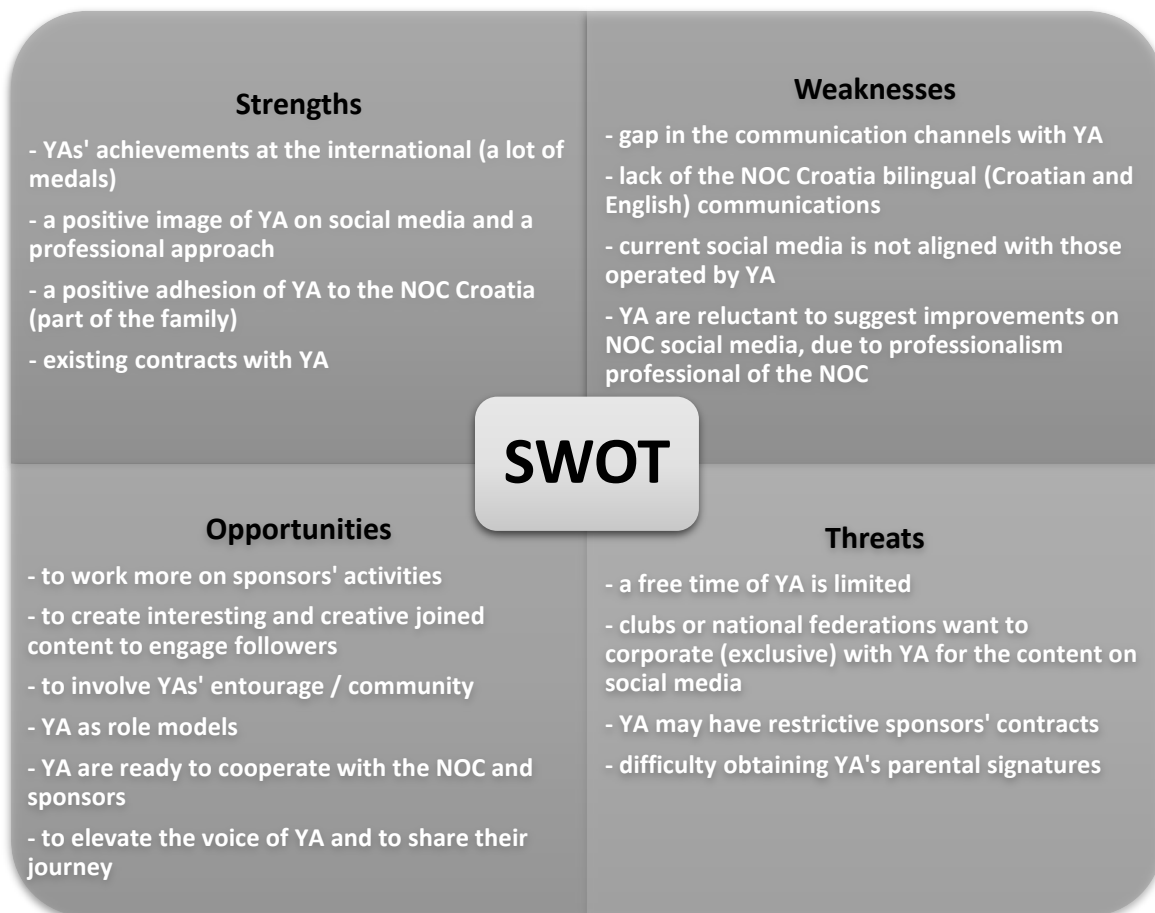
In the end, four questions are asked to the MEMOS professor Eline Andersen who held the Communication and Social Media module. Her opinion about the trend in social media used by young athletes depends on the sport, athletes, and cultural environment. For example, *"in cycling and the Tour de France riders use Twitter whereas, in some other sports, Instagram is still the trend."* The relevant type of content for building a relationship with young athletes also depends on who you are (federation, NOC, etc.) and which sports it refers to: *"If the NOC wants to build a relation to young athletes, has to analyze why the NOC is important to the athlete. It could be Olympic preparations to consider explaining the qualification system to the Olympics, and explain which services the NOC provides etc."* To find out

expected interactions and cooperation by young athletes it is necessary to ask them, for example by conducting persona analysis: „To understand the target group the best way is to get into a conversation with the target group and do some testing along the way to adjust to realities. “

4.3. SWOT analysis

The Chart 3 shows strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats for the NOC of Croatia in relation to cooperate with young athletes on social media.

Chart 3: SWOT analysis of the NOC about cooperation with young athletes on social media



Generally, the most dominant strength of the NOC of Croatia (NOC) are medals and international recognition of Croatian athletes. For example, Croatia won eight medals at Olympic Games in Tokyo 2020

and has a population of around 3.8 million (2022). That number places Croatia in 12th place as maintained by source Medals per capita (Medals per capita, 2020). But young athletes (YA) are also very successful internationally. They have a positive image on social media and a professional approach which followers appreciate. Also, there is a positive adhesion of YA to the NOC Croatia because they like to be part of the Olympic family. The NOC has different programs for supporting young athletes. In that case, there are existing contracts with them to regulate their status and amount of compensation. These contracts could be used and updated with athletes' obligations for cooperation with the NOC on social media or with sponsors. All these strengths are internal factors and there are also weaknesses. The issue for the NOC is the gap in the communication channels with YA. It requires time to get in touch with them, create a database with contacts and teach them to have direct contact with the NOC, not only through the national federation. One weakness for the NOC is not managing bilingual content on social media which could be important in cooperation with YA. Other internal weaknesses of the NOC are that current social media is not aligned with those operated by YA and YA is reluctant to suggest improvements on NOC's social media, due to professionalism perception of the NOC.

In addition to internal factors, there are external factors for the NOC: opportunities and threats. The one profitable opportunity for the NOC is working more on sponsors' activities with YA. There is more possibility to work with them on those activities because at this age they may not have contracts and are more flexible. As has been written in the Knowledge Review, the young generation uses social media daily and creating content with them may be effortless and more creative. This content could gain more engaged young followers by involving the young athletes' community. In that case, YA can be role models to the youth. A big opportunity for the NOC is that YA are ready to cooperate with the NOC as well as with sponsors. To conclude opportunities, the NOC could elevate the voice of YA and share their journey on social media to create exclusive content for followers. There are four external factors as threats to the NOC. Usually, the free time of young athletes is very limited and that could be a potential problem to create content or campaigns for social media, especially to coordinate with sponsors or other athletes. Another challenge is managing cooperation with national federations and clubs who also want to create exclusive content on social media with YA. At the same time, there are sponsors and some YA may have restrictive sponsors' contracts. All these external factors are threats to the NOC. In the end, there is one significant factor: cooperation with athletes up to the age of 18 depends on their parents. It is mandatory to have a parental signature and an athlete may want to work on social media content with the NOC, but firstly the parents need to allow it.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

In this chapter are given recommendations to the NOC of Croatia according to the research results. Young athletes are active on social media and would like to work on creating the content for the NOC social media. Overall, the idea is to work on enhancing cooperation with young athletes, but it should include many different stages such as athletes' contracts, sponsorships, collaboration between departments etc. All these activities should be part of the NOCs' Communication strategy, Strategy of social media, Marketing plan and other relevant documents.

Here are 7 recommendations to be implemented by the NOC Croatia:

1. To check existing contracts with young athletes

There are a few departments involved in that process: The legal affairs Department, the National sports federations Department and Olympic Program Department. In this step, it is very important to think about the parental signature. The team who manages social media from the International relations and corporate communications Department needs to present to them which type of activities will be included. Also, it is necessary to speak with the athlete and see what expects and wants to create, and how often it is possible. Parents and athletes should inform coaches, clubs, and national sports federations about the cooperation with the NOC.

2. To define social media and the type of content that will be used in cooperation with young athletes

According to the research results, it is recommended to choose Instagram because it is the most popular and TikTok could be interesting for short videos. The most accepted content on Instagram is reels and stories. Creating more shortly and funny videos with young athletes should be on focus. This decision is mainly on the team who manages social media and depends on the resources.

3. To create criteria for cooperation with young athletes

For enhancing cooperation with young athletes is very important to clarify the criteria about choosing with whom the NOC will cooperate and to have a reason for those activities. Criteria could be sports results, upcoming events or promoting of some sort of athlete. Also, in these criteria should be included activities with sponsors, for example: choosing an athlete from some specific sport because of the sponsors' need.

4. To improve communication with young athletes

From the beginning of this process, it is necessary to get in contact with young athletes. In this step, it is important to communicate with national sports federations to get in touch with young athletes. It will be challenging, but it is necessary to create a database with contacts. But this stage will be easier to realize after the finalization of the criteria and choosing athletes.

5. To define activities with sponsors

Usually, the NOC's cooperation with sponsors included only Olympians or Olympic Medalists. The recommendation is to define activities with sponsors which could include also young athletes. This work is on the Marketing department and International relations and corporate communications department. These activities should be part of the Communication strategy and marketing contracts of the NOC, but also in contracts with athletes.

6. To incorporate national sports federations for sharing the content on social media

National sports federations can help the NOC with the contacts of athletes but also should be informed about activities and invited for sharing content on their social media platforms. It would contribute to a better reach and visibility. Probably, it could be a win-win situation for both organizations: promoting sports and having interesting content for social media.

7. To measure the effectiveness of the cooperation with young athletes on social media

Using different analytical tools, it is possible to see the success of the campaigns with young athletes on social media. This step is very important to see if it is necessary to change strategy, activities, athletes, or sport. It will be useful to show results to sponsors and to build existing cooperation or arrange a new one.

As a result of the analysis of the collected data, recommendations are given to create the Strategy for cooperation with young athletes on social media. All these steps are part of the Strategy:

1. In the **short term**, the NOC should define a task force responsible for this project who will analyze the current situation. Also, to prepare the Strategy for cooperation with young athletes on social media which will define social media platforms and activities.
2. The **middle term** is reserved to get in touch with young athletes and national sports federations about cooperation. In this stage, it is important to determine activities and campaigns with sponsors which are part of the Strategy.
3. The **long-term** process means cooperation with young athletes and sponsors for creating content for social media. All activities in long term should be measured and results should be

presented to the NOC, national sports federations, and sponsors to build existing cooperation or arrange a new one.

6. ACTION PLAN

The section before gives recommendations to the NOC and terms of the process for implementation.

This section delivers the Action plan which includes the exact timeline, actions, and resources that NOC needs to follow to execute the Strategy.

In the following Table 3 is the Action plan for implementing this project through the Strategy for cooperation with young athletes on social media.

Table 3: Action plan

| Priority | Recommendation | Action | Lead | Resources | Timescales | Critical success factors |
|----------|---|---|---|-------------------------|---------------|--|
| 1 | To analyze existing contracts with young athletes | <p>To examine contracts with YA to understand what existing include</p> <p>To speak with YA and their parents about changing existing contracts</p> <p>To create a proposal of contract annex</p> | <p>The legal affairs Department</p> <p>International relations and corporative communication s Department</p> | Employees working hours | October 2022 | To find compromise between YA, parents, NF and clubs |
| 2 | To define social media and the type of content that will be used in cooperation with young athletes | <p>To create Strategy for cooperation with young athletes on social media</p> <p>To determine the budget</p> | International relations and corporative communication s Department | Employees working hours | October 2022 | The determine the budget for implementing new activities |
| 3 | To create criteria for cooperation with young athletes | To create standard which will which will determine athletes for cooperation | International relations and corporative communication s Department | Employees working hours | November 2022 | The selection of young athletes will be challenging |
| 4 | To build communication with young athletes | To make database with all contacts of YA by sports | International relations and corporative communication s Department | Employees working hours | December 2022 | To cooperate with NF and clubs to get contacts of YA |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|--|--|---|---------------|---|
| 5 | To define activities with sponsors | To analyze current activities with sponsors and make a plan for new activities with YA | Marketing department Costs of external analysis | Employees working hours | December 2023 | Different sponsors requirements Overlapping with sponsors of NF and YA |
| 6 | To incorporate national sports federations and <u>to implement</u> Strategy for cooperation with YA on social media | To work on this project together by creating content and sharing on social media | International relations and corporate communication s Department | Employees working hours | January 2023 | Different resources and strategies of managing social media Intensive communication with YA, NF and sponsors |
| 7 | To measure the effectiveness of the cooperation with young athletes on social media | To prepare analysis with external experts to realize the project's achievement | International relations and corporate communication s Department | Employees working hours Costs of external analysis | June 2023 | To present analysis to colleagues, sponsors, NF and YA and decide to continue or not |

7. CONCLUSION

To reach the goal of the project, to involve young athletes who are part of the NOC programs by engagement in social media activities, this project drives us to developed seven recommendations and an action plan. It would help the NOC to improve its communication strategies on social media and athletes' contracts. By improving collaboration with young athletes, the outcome should be to reach more young followers on social media.

The starting point of this project was that young athletes are active on social media (as Generation Z) and that the NOC can benefit from this as well as the athletes themselves. The main question of the project could be answered that the Croatian Olympic Committee should create activities in which young athletes will be part, including sponsors. This could help higher visibility of the NOC athletes and promotion of the sport.

According to the research results, all three hypotheses are confirmed:

H1: Young athletes like to be involved in social media campaigns and share NOC's content

H2: Young athletes are proud to be engaged in their sports promotion on social media

H3: Young athletes would benefit from the NOC marketing cooperation on social media to harmonize the different marketing engagements (national sports federation, personnel, and the NOC)

The project demonstrates the importance of social media in cooperation with young athletes, concluded mostly from the interviews with them. For that reason, interviews were the primary method of data collection as well as bench-learning. As seen from interviews, young athletes are ready to cooperate with the NOC and are interesting to work on social media content. From the bench-learning of the Austrian Sailing Federation and three national Olympic committees: Canada, Czech Republic and Slovenia, their practices related to this topic were obtained. Also, answers from MEMOS professor Eline Andersen helps to understand the topic from different view. This method helped to answer the project's questions and in creating the recommendations at the end.

The SWOT analysis shows the current and future situation of the NOC's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats related to social media and young athletes. This tool is very useful to be ready on time to react to potential problems in cooperation with young athletes on social media but also to be prepared for planning to use all existing and potential benefits to cooperate with them. At the end of

project, there are recommendations to the Croatian Olympic Committee on how to implement the Strategy for cooperation with young athletes on social media.

To conclude, the research results help to answer project questions connected to the main question: *How may the Croatian Olympic Committee enhance cooperation with young athletes through social media?*

According to interviews, bench-learning and SWOT analysis, the NOC of Croatia should create a Strategy for cooperation with young athletes on social media which will define all activities and responsibilities of both sides. Croatian young athletes are interested to work with the NOC and starting to cooperate with sponsors which will help them in the future to keep in touch with them. Also, they are satisfied with the NOC social media platforms but could be more modern and entertaining with more short videos and Instagram reels. They are ready to allocate time for creating these types of content. Finally, for young athletes, the most popular social media is Instagram followed by TikTok and YouTube. The reason for these platforms is the content - videos which are short, entertaining, and more informal. In their mind, the NOC is a more professional organization, so they do not expect too much entertaining content but also, they like to be informed by social media of the NOC. All fun types of content are welcome, like stories, polls, stickers, gifs... In their opinion, any kind of cooperation is welcome for purpose of their promotion and promotion of sports.

In the end, both sides could have benefited from this cooperation as well as sponsors. But for the NOC is most important to recognize the perspectives of young athletes and present them on social media before they become Olympians or Olympic Medalists. This current practice should be changed.

8. LIMITATIONS OF THIS PROJECT

At the end of the project, there are a few limitations to getting a deeper analysis of the topic.

The one reason is the pandemic time during the writing of this project and no-physical contact with young athletes (postponed events, restrictions etc.). Also, there is a gap in the communication with young athletes to conduct a survey and time limitations. Young athletes are very busy with competitions and to get big responses to a survey the best option is to provide them in person.

In the future, this project could be modified and expanded by providing surveys or conducting persona analysis.

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List of Abbreviations

- NF national federation
- NOC National Olympic Committee
- IOC International Olympic Committee
- Memosian a graduated of the MEMOS program
- YA young athletes

ABSTRACT

During this challenging time, non-profit sports organizations must transform communications channels and adapt them to the fast-moving expectations of the stakeholders. It is crucial how to communicate with an audience and how they consume information. This project will be focused on the young generations, specifically on young athletes.

The idea is to build relationships with young athletes through social media to reach out to young generation. The target group is Generation Z or iGen which was born between 1997 and 2012 or 1995 and 2009, depending on different sources, but it is easier to describe it as a generation who has been raised on the internet and social media. (Insider Intelligence, Wikipedia) Sport has a positive impact on society, and that potential must be used in all segments, especially for promoting physical activities and sport for the young generation. In this digital world, the easiest and most efficient way to reach young people is through social media. Social media is a part of our lives, and we live a digital life surrounded by smart devices. According to that, today it is possible simultaneously to watch the game, share behind the scenes from sports events, follow favorite athletes and their private lives or comment and share opinions about competitions and referees. All these benefits are given by social media, but the question is how to use them in the right way. These facts are supported in the Knowledge review chapter.

This project is focused on cooperation between the Croatian Olympic Committee and young athletes who take part in its programs by engaging them on social media. At the end of the project, the recommendations are given on how to achieve this goal while improving communication with them. For this purpose, three methods of the data collection were used: interviews, bench-learning and SWOT analysis, to give answers to project's questions and to test given hypothesis of the projects. The starting point of the project is that cooperation with young athletes on social networks will be beneficial for both sides, but the main question is how to achieve it or how to enhance cooperation with young athletes through social media.

Keywords: *young athletes, social media, sport, social media in sport, Croatian Olympic Committee*

RÉSUMÉ

Dans cette période difficile, les organisations sportives à but non lucratif doivent transformer les canaux de communication et les adapter aux attentes en constante évolution des parties prenantes. Il est crucial de savoir comment communiquer avec un public et comment il consomme l'information. Ce projet sera axé sur les jeunes générations, en particulier les jeunes athlètes.

L'idée est de nouer des relations avec de jeunes athlètes par le biais des médias sociaux pour atteindre la jeune génération. Le groupe cible est la génération Z ou iGen qui est née entre 1997 et 2012 ou 1995 et 2009, selon différentes sources, mais est plus facile à décrire comme une génération qui a été élevée sur Internet et les médias sociaux. (Insider Intelligence, Wikipedia) Le sport a un impact positif sur la société, et ce potentiel doit être utilisé dans tous les segments, notamment pour promouvoir les activités physiques et le sport auprès de la jeune génération. Dans ce monde numérique, le moyen le plus simple et le plus efficace d'atteindre les jeunes est de passer par les réseaux sociaux. Les médias sociaux font partie de nos vies et nous vivons une vie numérique entourée d'appareils intelligents. Selon cela, il est aujourd'hui possible de simultanément regarder le match, de partager les coulisses des événements sportifs, de suivre les athlètes préférés et leur vie privée ou de commenter et partager des opinions sur les compétitions et les arbitres. Tous ces avantages sont donnés par les médias sociaux, mais la question est de savoir comment les utiliser de la bonne manière. Ces faits sont étayés dans le chapitre Révision des connaissances.

Ce projet est axé sur la coopération entre le Comité Olympique Croate et les jeunes athlètes qui font partie de ses programmes en les engageant sur les réseaux sociaux. À la fin du projet, des recommandations sont données sur la manière d'atteindre cet objectif tout en améliorant la communication avec eux. À cette fin, trois méthodes de collecte de données ont été utilisées: les entretiens, l'apprentissage par banc d'essai et l'analyse SWOT, pour donner des réponses aux questions du projet et tester les hypothèses données des projets. Le point de départ du projet est que la coopération avec de jeunes athlètes sur les réseaux sociaux sera bénéfique pour les deux parties, mais la question principale est de savoir comment y parvenir ou comment améliorer la coopération avec de jeunes athlètes par la voie des médias sociaux.

Mots-clés: *jeunes athlètes, médias sociaux, sport, médias sociaux dans le sport, Comité Olympique Croate*

APPENDIX

Here is one transcript and sample of the interview conducted with the Croatian judoka Ana Viktorija Puljiz. All interviewers asked four research questions. Other questions were adapted during the conversation.

Aside from four research questions, interviewers answered questions about which social media they use, how often, which channel and what type of content are the most interesting for following sports and athletes, do they follow the NOC's profiles on social media and what should be improved or changed, do they prefer to cooperate with the NOC regarding social media and will they have to take the time to create content for social media etc.

Interview: Ana Viktorija Puljiz

Ana Viktorija Puljiz is a judoka and gold medalist in two multi-sports events in 2018: Youth Olympic Games in Buenos Aires and European Youth Olympic Festival in Baku. She is 20 years old and competes in judo on the international level (Grand Slams, European and World Championships, Mediterranean Games...).

Which social media do you use?

As a young user, most time I spend watching videos on Instagram and YouTube. I was active on Facebook before, but I did not use it for a long time and am planning to deactivate my profile. On YouTube I do not have my channel, just watch others' videos. TikTok seems very cool and entertaining to me, but I do not have a lot of free time to spend there. So, I prefer to watch Instagram reels. Mostly on Instagram, I follow judokas, athletes from other sports, clubs, the National Judo Federation, the Olympics, and the Croatian Olympic Committee. Instead of sports, I follow food and travel influencers or bloggers.

Which type of content do you prefer on social media?

On Instagram and YouTube, for me the most interesting content is short videos or reels about food, travel, and sports. Also, funny pictures or stories on that topic could be interesting. I just prefer short terms of viewing because of the time. On Instagram I like entertaining content such as stories (polls, questions, gifs) too.

When did you start to follow the NOC of Croatia on social media?

I started to follow Croatian Olympic Committee on social media in 2018, before EYOF Baku and YOG Buenos Aires. It was very important to me and my family to the appearance on the NOC social media

because it was too hard to qualify for those events and I won gold medals there. I knew that was a very important thing to compete there because the NOC also shared stories about me.

What the NOC of Croatia can improve related to social media?

The content of the NOC social media is okay but could be shorter and more interesting video. Good thing is because the NOC social media also giving information about other athletes, events or competitions but also provide sometimes entertaining content. The NOC should more focus on Instagram reels and maybe think about activation on TikTok, but with no hurry.

Do you have obligations to a club or national federation relating to social media?

We do not have any obligation to clubs or our national federation about posting on social media. Sometimes, we have to record videos or send a picture to the national federation for posting and that is all we need. The club has an Instagram account managed by our coach and he is very skilled and up to date with posting the content.

What is your opinion about cooperation on social media with young athletes relating to sponsorships?

The most important thing is to show and give a media appearance to the less popular sports and athletes instead of football, for example. It is good to think about cooperation with young athletes on social media because they will have the opportunity to work with sponsors. It will be easier for them in the future to realize sponsorships. In my opinion, Croatia has a lot of perspective young athletes like alpine skier Zrinka Ljutić the World No.1 Junior in slalom, tennis player Mili Poljičak who won the Wimbledon Juniors title and Petra Marčinko is the best Junior in 2021 (ITF)... With their higher appearance on NOC social media, the youth will meet them and know more about them. Also, they can interest young people in playing and practicing sports. This kind of cooperation could help to promote sports and to engage the young population on social media.

For example, Croatia has the No. 1 judoka in the World – Barbara Matić. It is hard to be the best for years, but she is. With this great achievement, she has now a few personal small sponsorships. The problem is that judo is not that popular in Croatia, but she is very successful. So, we need to recognize this in Croatia and the NOC also can help to promote these successful athletes like her. This relates to sponsorships because if the NOC will start to work with young athletes and sponsors at an early age, it will help athletes a lot in the future. It can help the athlete and promote a sport too.