

Sponsoring sports in today's digital age

A Use Case from the 2019 FIFA Women's World Cup

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Introduction

Sports sponsorship has been around for a long time. In the ancient Greek and Roman period, the high-social class would sponsor events such as the Olympics, gladiator fights, and chariot races. The objective of sponsors at that time was mostly to showcase the city's reputation and standing,¹ and it was only during the early 20th century that brands first started to sponsor athletes (Honus Wagner in 1910), sport clubs, or sports events (e.g. Wimbledon tennis tournament in 1902). During this period, sports sponsorship mainly included contracts with athletes and teams, providing them with free equipment and gear that they would wear during competitions. One of the earliest successes in sports sponsorship was the free provision of spikes by Adi Dassler (creator of Adidas) to sprinter Jesse Owens for the 1936 Olympics. Owens' outstanding performance (four gold medals) resulted in effective product placement and reinforced the credibility of Adi Dassler's brand².

1. Eric Schwarz, J. H. (2008). *Advanced Theory and Practice in Sport Marketing*. Retrieved from Taylor & Francis Group: <https://doi.t/3aa14Mz>

2. Fresh Business Thinking. (2011, April 11). *The History Of Sports Marketing*. Retrieved from Fresh Business Thinking: <https://doi.t/3a3zRtv>

The real sports sponsorship revolution came with the TV coverage of sporting events in the 40s and 50s. With time, sports events were being broadcasted globally, giving brands the opportunity to be seen all around the world. Nowadays, sports sponsorship has become international, as depicted by the numerous brands that sponsor clubs or competitions abroad. In the English football first division, Premier League—the most watched football championship—major clubs such as Arsenal, Chelsea, Manchester United and Manchester City have first sponsor companies from the United Arab Emirates, Japan, and the USA. In addition, while newspapers and sports brands were the first sporting event sponsors, sports sponsorship now clearly appeals to brands from a diverse range of industries. This is well evidenced in the UK. In 2019, brands active in the financial services, automotive,

airline, gambling, and alcohol industries each represented between 9 percent and 19 percent of the total spent on sports sponsorship³.





Overall, sports sponsorship has been increasing for the last 10 years. While \$37.9 billion was spent on sports sponsorship in 2007, a further 50 percent was spent in 2018, at \$65.8 billion. Out of this total spend, the market is widely dominated by companies based in three regions: North America (36.7 percent), followed by Europe (26.7 percent) and Asia Pacific (25.2 percent)⁴.

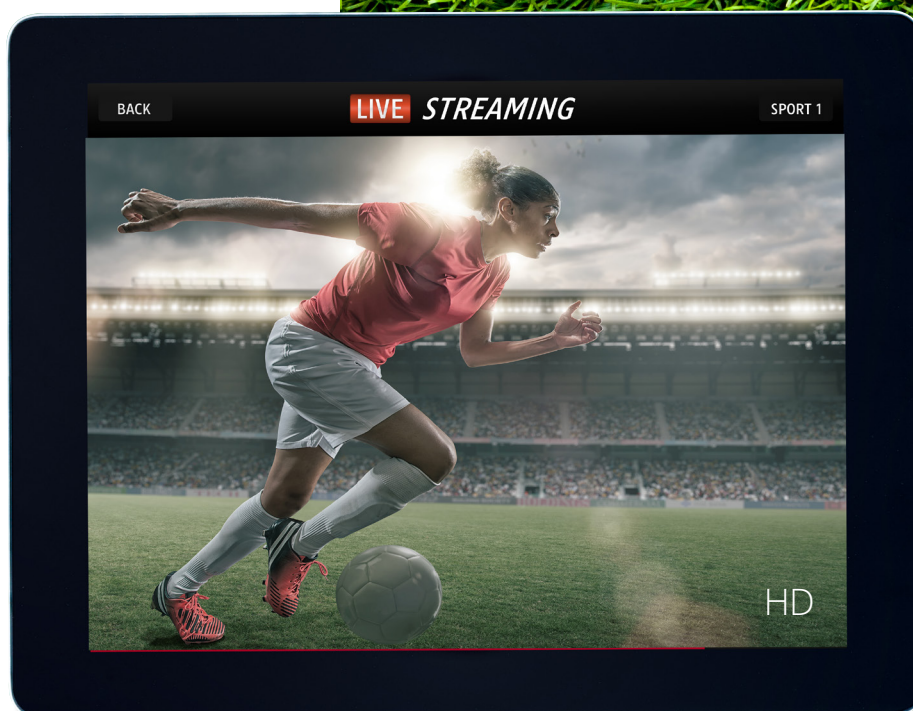
This increase in total spend per brand over the last 10 years reflects brands' belief that the sports sector is an attractive market to sponsor. While sports continue to attract many people to stadiums, digital advancements and the social media expansion have brought new possibilities for brands to increase their visibility and improve their sponsorship message. In this context, brands have been forced to adapt to this evolution in sponsorship. In this report, we'll cover some of the approaches brands can use to successfully sponsor sporting events today, taking into account the inevitable and ongoing changes in public participation at sports events—from physically attending a chariot race more than 2,000 years ago, to following an event via digital media today. This will be largely illustrated with a Use Case on the 2019 FIFA Women's World Cup (WWC) held in France.

While sports continue to attract many people to stadiums, digital advancements and the social media expansion have brought new possibilities for brands to increase their visibility and improve their sponsorship message.

3. Culter, M. (2019, May 2). Sport misses out on £14bn despite growth year for sponsorship spend. Retrieved from Two Circles: <https://deloi.tt/2tkxjlc>
4. Venturoli, E. (2019, March 26). Annual spending in sponsorships. Retrieved from RTR Sports Marketing: <https://deloi.tt/2tiOWXI>

Figure 1: Sports sponsorship evolution over time

	Time	Motivation	Tool
	Greek and Roman times	Demonstrate cities' prestige and standing	Investment in events such as Olympics, gladiator fights or chariot races
	Early 20 th century	Product placement	Provision of free equipment to athletes
	Mid and late 20 th century	Brand visibility	Logo placement in stadiums and on athletes' equipment
	21 st century	Fan engagement and relationship	Storytelling via digital media





Understanding sports sponsorship

To better understand sports sponsorship, we'll need to delve further into certain core aspects of sports sponsorship today. First, it should be understood how recent technological developments have influenced this sector. Second, it should be noted that sports sponsorship is unique and differs from sponsorship in other industries. Third, to judge whether sponsorship can be considered successful or not, measures of success or failure need to be examined.

The influence of recent technological developments

Sports sponsorship is continuously evolving, but it appears that the current age of social media and digitization has fundamentally impacted this area over the last decade.

Digitalization has enabled fans to access sport content outside of stadiums. While going to the stadium was the only way to watch sport a century ago, the arrival of public TV broadcasting offered fans the possibility to watch certain events from home. The option to stream sporting events has been a real revolution in recent years. It now offers fans the possibility to watch almost any sporting competition anytime, anywhere. For brands, this provides new outlooks and increases the potential for visibility.

Social media has also widened perspectives for brands, as it offers new platforms to build brand presence and investment. While in the past a brand logo could only be advertised during the event itself, it is now also possible to generate

5. Johan Cruyff Institute. (2017, February 10). Sponsorship 360: adaptation to a constantly changing world. Retrieved from Cruyff Institute: <https://deloi.tt/2TmLh5v>

6. More information in below section "Negative impact on reputation"



some visibility outside the stadium. Indeed, many videos are posted by events, clubs, or athletes on social networks, depicting the athletes before and after the competition. Social media also offers new ways of interacting with fans. A large part of the content can now be generated directly by fans, increasing the volume of content depicting the brand logo. While this generates greater visibility for brands than before, it also reduces the amount of control brands can exercise. Today, content having a negative impact on a brand's image can be posted and shared online within seconds⁵. In this context, it is therefore particularly key to consider measures of failure as well as of success⁶.

Sports sponsorship is unique

While sponsorship has common goals irrespective of the industry being sponsored, it can be argued that sport has a power that few other industries have, such as art sponsoring or product placement in TV shows.

Sports sponsorship can give brands access to a mass audience that is both global and loyal.

As an example, comparing this to arts and cultural events: while the overall number of people actually attending arts and cultural events is higher than attendance at sporting events, sport has the advantage of being widely broadcasted⁷. With TV and streaming coverage, sponsoring sporting events can offer significantly higher visibility for the brand. In addition, while people tend to only watch a concert on TV, sports fans tend to watch the game/event, as well as previews and post-game/event analyses. This gives brands an additional opportunity to broadcast their logo during commercials.

With the significant television and streaming coverage of sports events, this content can be watched all over the world, providing international visibility for the brand. Arts and culture audiences tend to be a more niche audience, with particular demographics and socioeconomic groups. Sports usually attract a less targeted audience, which again provides greater visibility for the brand⁷.

Finally, sports fans tend to be very loyal. An Australian study analyzed this loyalty in the context of performing arts and sports event attendees⁷. It found that around 8.5 percent of the performing arts audience attended six or more events a year. However for sports attendees, this number increased to 22.2 percent on average, and to 33.3 percent specifically for soccer. This indicates that sports fans are more loyal, and will therefore be more inclined to notice the brand advertising.⁸

Measures of success

To understand how a brand can successfully sponsor a sporting event in this area of digitalization and social media, it is important to understand how brands measure success. The usual goal of a brand sponsoring an event is to boost revenues and sales. The appropriate metric to measure this is ROI, or Return on Investment. While this is the most important metric for a brand, this is also the most difficult to measure. First,

sponsorship investment and revenues aren't perfectly correlated. Indeed, many other factors such as product innovation, sport popularity, advertising, etc. can have an impact on sales, in addition to sports sponsorship. Second, receiving returns for sponsoring sport events can be a very lengthy process. Being a sponsor of a sporting event for decades reinforces peoples' perception of the brand over time, and benefits may only be seen years later.

However, brands are aware that they can achieve a solid ROI if they improve their brand visibility, brand positioning and presence in the market. With the evolution of technology and data analytics, these measures of success have become easier to calculate.

[...] sports fans are more loyal, and will therefore be more inclined to notice the brand advertising.

7. Farrelly, F., & Quester, P. (n.d.). Sports And Arts Sponsors: Investigating The Similarities And Differences In Management Practices. Adelaide, Australia.

8. Bloxsome, E., Voges, K., & Pope, N. (n.d.). Sport Sponsorship: Appeal And Risks.



1. Brand Visibility

Brand visibility has long been an objective for brands sponsoring an event. Having the brand logo depicted on athletes' equipment or being widely displayed in stadiums are natural techniques to enhance brand visibility and recognition. In addition, with the increase in TV coverage, advertising during breaks has become another powerful advertising method. In 2018, brands paid at least US\$5 million to play a 30-second ad during the Super Bowl. This price was considered worthwhile for brands to advertise at an event watched by around 110 million people⁹.

9. Alexander, T. (2018, January 25). Super Bowl: Why \$5 Million for 30 Seconds May No Longer Make Sense. Retrieved from AW360: <https://deloitte/3a8M1kO>



WWC USE CASE

VISIBILITY OF VISA SPONSORSHIP

Visa was one of the main sponsors of the 2019 FIFA Women's World Cup held in France. Focusing on the last week of the Women's World Cup, its sponsoring had the following impact on its brand visibility:



5,000

Unique authors



10,000

Mentions



355,510

Engagement



9,000,000,000

Potential reach

"10,000 mentions" represents the amount of content published during that week in which Visa was associated with the World Cup. For the brand, this represents a share of voice of 11.5 percent (i.e. 11.5 percent of the 87,074 mentions related to the World

Cup) among main sponsors. Visa ranks number three behind Nike and Adidas. The share of voice graph can be found in Appendix 1.

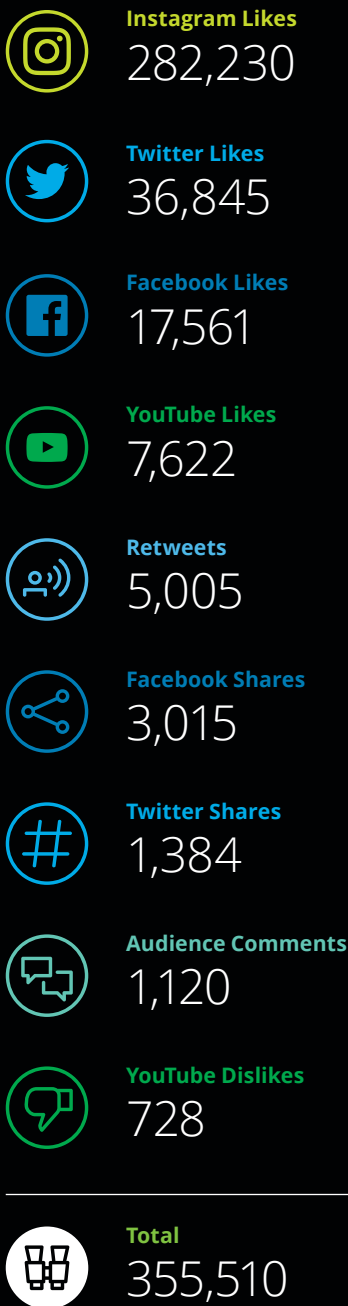
Part of these 10,00 mentions, the quality measure needs to be considered in order to understand the possible impact of a mention. Appendix 2 compares two Visa mentions. The first one depicts a picture of the American player Rapinoe receiving the "Player of the Match" prize by Visa, with Visa's name depicted in the text and on the picture. This is surely better noticed by the audience than the second advertising example, depicting the English player White answering interview questions in front of a billboard depicting the Visa logo.

The 10,000 mentions were generated by 5,000 different authors. Among these, some are more important than others for Visa. For example, the American player Rapinoe shared on her Twitter account an emotional video about her life, accompanied with specific thanks to Visa (Appendix 3). Rapinoe being a celebrity, this provided extra visibility for Visa; the video has been viewed 933,000 times, liked 79,000 times, and commented on 2,000 times.



Data provided by Talkwalker s.à.r.l.

The engagement score of 355,510 breaks down as follows:



Brands can measure their visibility by using a variety of metrics, the most common of which being “mentions”; this measures the amount of content associating the brand with the sponsored event. The number of mentions can be compared across brands. This comparative measure is called the “share of voice”, which is a good metric to measure the buzz generated around a brand in relation to competitors. It is however argued that the “content” and “share of voice” measure should be combined with “promotion quality”. Promotion quality calculates how well one’s logo is depicted. While the same reach can be had by a 30-second video depicting one’s brand offering and a 30-second video showing a goal in a football game where one’s logo appears at the back, it is likely that the first will have a higher impact on brand visibility than the second.

With the social media explosion, new metrics are also becoming more important. These include the “reach” and “engagement rate”. Reach measures the number of people that were reached by an event stream, an article or post in which a brand is depicted. For example, this is calculated by the number of people who watch an event and the number of viewers and followers on social media. Engagement rate measures the total interactions made by others on that article/post, such as the total number of likes, comments and shares on social media.

Two other measures that brands have started considering in recent years are “unique authors” and “content shared by influencers”. Unique authors give the brand an overview of the amount of content not produced by the brand, but rather generated by unpaid contributors such as fans, and published on social media.

With the social media explosion, new metrics are also becoming more important.

This free advertising for brands enables them to save a portion of their advertising budget. In addition, it is argued that content generated by users other than marketers is perceived as more reliable by the audience, as these people are neutral players and are not driven by financial incentives to promote the brand.

Lastly, content shared by influencers refers to publications shared or generated by people, usually celebrities, who have a high number of followers. This has the advantage of generating advertising for the brand to a large and potentially new audience. Use Case #1 illustrates the visibility measures of Visa sponsoring of the 2019 FIFA Women’s World Cup (WWC).

Brand positioning refers to the perception people have of a brand, and how it differs from that of its competitors.



2. Positioning

One common objective for brands sponsoring sporting events is to create or reinforce their positioning regarding a particular topic. Brand positioning refers to the perception people have of a brand, and how it differs from that of its competitors. Sponsoring a sporting event can reinforce a certain perception in consumers' mind, thereby improving the brand image, which is likely to have an impact on sales and revenues.

A shared objective for brands sponsoring sporting events is for the brand to be associated with the positive values sport promotes, such as high performance, commitment and an active lifestyle. Sponsoring the best athletes or team is likely to create an image of a high-performing winner in consumers' minds. Many sporting events present different values, and offer brands the chance to be associated with it. For example, sponsoring an eSports event can reinforce the brand's digital and innovative image. More recently, brands have invested massively in the sponsoring of the 2019 FIFA Women's World Cup held in France. The all-women event was largely compared to its masculine counterpart, which gave rise to a number of discussions on gender equity during this period¹⁰. This represented a good opportunity for brands to reinforce their pro-gender equity image.



3. Strategic partnerships

While sports event sponsorship can directly increase brand visibility amongst consumers, it also offers brands the opportunity to engage with new business partners and potentially build strategic partnerships. Such events let brands demonstrate their expertise in a certain field, and build their reputation within the industry. As sports sponsors tend to come from diverse industries, this is also usually an opportunity to gain access to a new audience¹¹.

To further support this, some sporting events organize pre-event sponsor press conferences or sponsor nights, where sponsors can meet and discuss. Main sponsors may also be given the opportunity to make a speech or presentation. This gives brands a real opportunity to showcase their business and send a target message to business owners and other potential influencers, in a context outside day-to-day work. Sponsors might also receive some secured tickets, that they use to invite clients and prospects, giving the brands an opportunity to directly connect and engage with other firms, potentially resulting in new business opportunities.

10. Zipp, S., & de Soysa, L. (2019, June 9). Women's World Cup brings opportunity to investigate broader gender inequality in sport. Retrieved from Independent: <https://deloi.tt/2QYlTY>

11. Ruthven, H. (2017, January 3). Why sports sponsorship worked for these three businesses. Retrieved from Real Business: <https://deloi.tt/35SiUij>

Measures of failures

While sports sponsorship can generate numerous benefits for brands, it can also be risky, given the financial investment and time required, and the wide exposure to the market. It is therefore also worth considering metrics of sports sponsorship failures.



1. Low return on investment

As stated in the previous section, the goal of brands when investing in sponsorship is primarily to boost sales and revenues. While ROI is difficult to calculate, it is argued that some metrics can be used to indirectly calculate the impact on ROI, such as "reach", "share of voice", "user content generated" and "engagement rate". Sponsorship investments should increase these metrics for the brand. If an increase in these metrics cannot be seen during the sponsorship period or shortly after, it is likely that the sponsorship investment was not wisely spent, which can be considered as a measure of failure.



2. Negative impact on reputation

By sponsoring a sporting event, an athlete or a team usually associates the image of a brand with that of the party being sponsored. While this can be very powerful when sponsoring a successful event/athlete/team, it can also generate a negative perception of the brand should the party being sponsored misbehave or perform poorly.

Unfair-play is probably the main misconduct brands do not want to be associated with. Cheating, corruption or doping are contradictory to sporting values, and can have very damaging effects on the party being sponsored and the sponsor's image. Looking at sentiment analysis can provide brands with an overview of people's reaction to certain articles and posts. Sentiment analysis classifies the audience reaction as negative, neutral or positive based on the words and emoticons used in the content the brand is associated with. Should the brand be associated with cheating, corruption or doping, the brand can clearly expect a negative reaction from the audience and an impact on the consumers' desire to purchase brand products. The brand's response, dissociating itself from these actions, is very important in order to contain the impact.

While sporting conduct has always mattered, athletes' behavior outside the stadium/off the field is now also scrutinized. With the rise of social media,

content can be produced and generated by random users at any time, anywhere in the world. Media scrutiny is higher than ever before, and an athlete's behavior today in public spaces and in their private life can be shared online within seconds on social media. Should this behavior reveal misconduct, such as violence or alcohol abuse, this can affect the image of the athlete with whom the sponsoring brand is associated.

The benefits and visibility of sports sponsorships are also essentially dependent on the athlete's/team's performance. While sponsors usually pay a fixed sponsorship to athletes/a team, the rewards for the brand will be very different depending on whether an athlete performs exceptionally or poorly. For example, while the return on investment may be high should a team/athlete reach the final and play in front of a packed stadium and large TV audience, the return on investment could be very low should the athlete or team be eliminated in the first round, or should an athlete forfeit. Sponsoring a team or team sport event can be considered less risky, as there is a guarantee that a specific number of games will be played, and for a specific amount of time. For example, a brand sponsoring a Premier League football club knows that at least 38 games will be played during the championship, each for 90 minutes. However, this is not the case when sponsoring an individual athlete or an individual sporting competition. The athlete's presence and the duration of the game is not guaranteed, as this depends on their performance and health. In tennis for example, the ATP finals take place at the end of every season, with only the best eight players of the year. In 2014, while the final between the two best players of the year Djokovic and Federer should have provided the sponsoring brands with high visibility, Federer forfeited a few minutes before the final, representing a major loss for the event and for the sponsoring brands.

The benefits and visibility of sports sponsorships are also essentially dependent on the athlete's/ team's performance.

Brand positioning to successfully sponsor sporting events

Targeting a new market

As explained in the previous section, sponsoring an event/team/athlete can provide a brand with substantial benefits. However reaping these benefits isn't easy, especially due to competition between brands. The most popular and famous sports, clubs or athletes already have expensive and secured contracts, making it impossible for most brands to sponsor them. Some of these include the US\$300 million 10-year contract between Federer and its equipment provider¹² or the contract between Manchester United and its major sponsor, at US\$269 million a year¹³. On top of being expensive, the best athletes, teams and events are usually sponsored by multiple sponsors, making it difficult for the brands to create an impactful brand association¹⁴.

For example, the Rio 2016 Olympic Games were sponsored by over 60 companies,

If a brand wants to invest in the long-term and build a relationship with a sport/event/team/athlete, which will be recognized by fans, brands tend to avoid these crowded markets and focus on new and less congested markets.

making it challenging for these sponsors to create a distinctive image and connection with the Olympics.

Entering these markets now would require a significant investment for brands and would likely consist of one-time sponsorships. This only offers some visibility over the short term, and decreases the chances of aligning the brand with sporting values¹⁵. If a brand wants to invest in the long-term and build a relationship with a sport/event/team/athlete, which will be recognized by fans, brands tend to avoid these crowded markets and focus on new and less congested markets. Targeting a new market usually represents two benefits for brands: 1) lower cost of entry and 2) potential to align with some key and on-trend values.

Lower cost of entry

Targeting a new market is usually cheaper for brands to access. This therefore gives smaller brands the opportunity to invest in sports sponsoring. Targeting a new market might include sponsoring a new sport, a new sport discipline, a sport with increasing attendance or media coverage or targeting an event where barriers of entry are high for big brands.

A) SPONSORING A NEW SPORT

Being one of the first sponsors to associate itself with a market brings higher chances of successfully building

a relationship with the audience and market.

In order to become one of the first sponsors, some brands decide to sponsor relatively new sports for which they believe there is potential. As an example of sponsoring a new sport, Intel entered the eSports market in 2006 when they began sponsoring the ESL (Electronic Sports League). While the eSports sector was small at the time, its market value has been continuously increasing and is expected to reach \$1 billion in 2020. The ESL, held in Poland in early 2019, reached a new record, welcoming 174,000 fans over two weekends, 157 million hours watched and 232 million viewers¹⁵. The brand is now strongly associated with the ESL and eSports in general.

B) SPONSORING A NEW DISCIPLINE

Other brands decide to sponsor a new sport discipline. Over the last years, women's sports have been watched by fans with increasing regularity. While their male counterparts are already widely sponsored by brands, some female sports are still not overcrowded. In early 2019, many brands announced their sponsorship of the 2019 FIFA Women's World Cup, which took place in July 2019. The brands bet that the event would attract a wide audience, and would increase their visibility. Use Case #2 illustrates how, Arkema, a French chemical company started sponsoring women's football.

12. Hirel, J. (2018, July 3). Roger Federer lâche Nike pour Uniqlo... et un chèque de 300 millions. Retrieved from Le Point: <https://deloi.tt/2BSMJ5n>

13. Ovalle, J. (2018, October 23). These are the most expensive sponsorships in European football. Retrieved from Latin American Post: <https://deloi.tt/2NFNDJl>

14. Hobbs, T. (2017, March 7). Football is overcrowded' says Heineken as it toasts 27 years of sponsoring rugby. Retrieved from Marketing Week: <https://deloi.tt/2uPauLN>

15. ESL. (2019, March 27). ESL and Intel welcomed 174,000 fans at world's most attended esports event and most watched ESL CS:GO tournament ever.

Retrieved from ESL: <https://deloi.tt/2NkQ2ZF>



ARKEMA SPONSORS A NEW DISCIPLINE

Arkema, a French chemical company, was the first French official sponsor of the 2019 FIFA Women's World Cup. According to unofficial numbers, the event sponsoring cost €1 million to the firm, while it would have cost 7 to 10 times more to sponsor the 2016 French Euro Cup^A.

The company had multiple objectives: First, it wanted to increase its visibility, as the brand name was relatively unknown in France. As the World Cup is watched internationally, it was also an opportunity for the brand to gain some visibility in potential new markets such as China, Japan, and the United States. Second, they wanted to communicate internally and externally that they are actively supporting social diversity^B.

In order to reach their goals and generate a solid return on investment, the company rolled out a complete advertising plan. First, their logo was depicted in all event stadiums. Second, the company went to the different host cities with an Arkema bus in order to meet the fans. Third, the company contracted Gaëtane Thiney, player of the French national team, to be the brand ambassador. On top of these activities, the company was active on social

media, which enabled the brand to reach a larger audience and associate its posts with key messages. Among the different social networks used by Arkema, the content with the highest engagement rate was an Instagram post announcing a contest to win tickets for the World Cup final. The post was commented on 5,700 times and liked 4,500 times. It was accompanied by the hashtags #BehindTheDreams and #DareToShine. These hashtags were associated with Arkema publications 373 and 329 times respectively between May and July 2019. As these hashtags were associated with high performance and gender equity, Arkema could emphasize its image of a brand supporting diversity.

While most of the social media content related to the World Cup was generated by the company, some content was generated by external parties. Indeed, being the first national sponsor of the event already generated some buzz for the company in the media before the event. During the event, the company was mentioned on some fan and news outlet posts. Overall, the company was associated with posts created by 816 authors on 129 different websites between May and July 2019,

ranging from game highlights on Twitter to newspaper articles discussing sponsorship in women's football.

Seemingly satisfied with the event sponsoring, the company decided to continue to sponsor women's football as they decided, after the World Cup, to become a sponsor of the French Women's first division^C.



Data provided by Talkwalker s.à.r.l.

A. BeSoccer. (2019, June 6). Mondial féminin : pour les sponsors, un message de mixité bien rodé. Retrieved from BeSoccer: <https://deloi.tt/2NqHY9R>

B. SportBusiness.Club. (2019, June 7). Arkema en alchimie avec la Coupe du monde. Retrieved from SportBusiness.Club: <https://deloi.tt/2TlNjmB>

C. Arkema. (2019, June 21). Arkema s'engage avec la D1 Féminine de football. Retrieved from Arkema: <https://deloi.tt/386fR7v>

A sport's popularity often depends on the performance of its local or national team and the number of practitioners.

C) SPONSORING AN INCREASINGLY POPULAR SPORT

A sport's popularity often depends on the performance of its local or national team and the number of practitioners. While a sport might be long established, its popularity can change over time. Some brands try to identify this trend early enough to secure good sponsorships. Field hockey has been an Olympic sport since 1980, but it has only recently become a major sport in Belgium. From 16,000 members in 2006, Belgian federation numbers have

continuously increased by 10 percent, reaching 46,000 members in 2019¹⁶.

Noticing this trend, Belfius bank signed a contract with the Belgian national team in 2017. With the 2018 world championships, the team became the first Belgian team to become world champion for a team sport; this meant the Belfius logo could enjoy widespread visibility via the team's jersey. By being the team's sponsor, the brand gained national and international visibility, as well as linking its image to the values associated with field hockey¹⁷.



SNCF ASSOCIATING ITSELF WITH A POPULAR CAUSE THROUGH HASHTAGS

SNCF, the French national railway company, decided to use the sponsoring of the Women's World Cup to encourage women to pursue their goals. For example, they created a video featuring women playing football or working in the railway industry, delivering a powerful message mentioning that these women were pursuing their passion, irrespective of popular

stereotypes^A. This video was widely liked and shared on social media. The publication was accompanied by the hashtag #TousLesButsSontPossibles (i.e. all goals are possible). The hashtag was created by the company for its World Cup campaign. It was used 7,400 times during the duration of the World Cup, from 6,200 unique authors generating an engagement rate of 14,000. The hashtag was sometimes used without any reference to the SNCF by users, who simply expressed their thoughts about gender equity and reinforced their message using the SNCF-generated hashtag (Appendix 4).

SNCF was not the only brand to use hashtags to illustrate their support for women and gender equity. During the World Cup, two hashtags went especially viral: #DareToShine and #ChangetheGame. These were respectively associated with 225,000 and 110,000 publications between May and

July 2019. These hashtags expressed a desire to change society's vision about women's football and women in sport in general.



Data provided by Talkwalker s.à.r.l.

A. SNCF. (2019, June 5). Coupe du Monde Féminine de la FIFA 2019 - #TousLesButsSontPossibles . Retrieved from YouTube - SNCF: <https://deloi.tt/30siPAQ>

16. RTBF. (2018, February 5). Jusqu'où ira le hockey belge? . Retrieved from RTBF Sport: <https://deloi.tt/2TkWsLY>

17. Martin, A. (2018, December 17). En misant sur les Red Lions, Belfius aussi a transformé son shoot-out. Retrieved from L'Echo: <https://deloi.tt/3a5kiBD>

D) SPONSORING AN EVENT WHERE BIGGER BRANDS HAVE HIGH COST OF ENTRY

Events are sometimes restrictive in their choice of sponsors. In these cases, they usually prefer to opt for domestic sponsors to advertise the event as a truly national event. This will be the case for the 2020 Olympics in Japan. The 2020 Games organization decided to mostly enlist Japanese companies to sponsor the event. For these companies, it was a unique opportunity to associate themselves with the Games, while other international competitors could not sponsor the event. In total, US\$3.1 billion were raised from Japanese companies alone, which is a record for domestic sponsoring of a sporting event. The exclusivity, international exposure, and the values associated with the event convinced the brands to become official sponsors¹⁸.

Sponsoring a market with associated values

Targeting a new market can also provide a strategic opportunity for brands to associate themselves with some popular values found in new markets. This can reinforce the brand's image in relation to a specific theme. During the FIFA Women's World Cup in France, gender equality and women's ability to assert themselves as women were largely discussed¹⁹. For brands, this was an opportunity to join the movement and demonstrate their commitment to a greater equality in society. In order to properly formulate this message, brands put several strategies into practice. Some brands extensively promote their intention to pay women more for their efforts. For example, Adidas announced in March 2019 that they would pay the same bonus to their sponsored players as they did to their male counterparts in 2018, if they won the World Cup²⁰.

Other brands decided to promote their positions by using social media, with short posts (key facts, videos) proving to be

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very effective. When the content is new or innovative to readers, it is highly likely that it will be liked, commented on, and shared. There are also usually hashtags included in these posts, which are a very easy way to send a message and demonstrate solidarity with a cause. These hashtags can be reused by social media users, who then build an indirect connection with the brand. Research shows that to create an effective hashtag, it should be descriptive, unique, short, and easy to understand. To make effective use of hashtags, brands should try to use a single specific hashtag. Indeed, using the same hashtag again and again will make it more visible to the audience and will reinforce the brand's association with a given cause. While hashtags are mostly used on Twitter and Instagram, other social media platforms such as Facebook, Google+, and Pinterest are also starting to use them. Use Case #3 shows how hashtags were used during the World Cup and how SNCF effectively used its hashtag to associate itself with gender equity.

18. Lewis, L., Harding, R., & Inagaki, K. (2019, August 14). Olympic sponsorship: Japan Inc pressed into national service. Retrieved from Financial Times: <https://deloi.tt/386Ccld>

19. Zipp, S., & de Soysa, L. (2019, June 9). Women's World Cup brings opportunity to investigate broader gender inequality in sport.

Retrieved from Independent: <https://deloi.tt/2QYlTY>

20. Whyatt, K. (2019, March 9). Women's 2019 World Cup winners to receive same bonus payment as men for first time, Adidas announce.

Retrieved from The Telegraph: <https://deloi.tt/2QSGWws>

Communication for effective sporting event sponsorship

With the explosion of social media, brands now have numerous channels at their disposal to sponsor and advertise a sporting event. In addition, more traditional channels such as advertising on jerseys and in stadiums also receive greater visibility, thanks to the arrival of social media and streaming platforms, which present live events and highlights. While there are more advertising options than ever for brands, this also comes at a greater cost. In this context, it is very important for brands to consider their objectives when sponsoring an event, and which communication channel will be most suited to reaching this goal. As discussed in previous sections, two of the general objectives for brands when sponsoring an event are to increase brand visibility, and to position itself. Brand visibility and positioning will have an effect on people's knowledge of the brand and perception of the brand's presence in the

market. As explained in the section on measuring success, counting the number of brand mentions via different channels, the reach and engagement generated by the communications, are a good means of assessing whether the brand has fulfilled its objectives.

In order to meet their objectives, brands can use a range of communication channels, generally split between more traditional channels, such as TV or print advertising, and emerging channels, such as social media.

On the one hand, more traditional channels are usually used by official sponsors who have paid a certain amount of money to sponsor the event. TV and newspaper communications usually have lower visibility, reach and engagement than social media. However, in return for their investment, brands usually receive some advertising exclusivity, enabling them to

more easily increase their visibility and positioning, as only few brands will be directly associated with the event. These brands frequently try to leverage their privileges via social media, in an effort to increase their visibility and reach. For example, sponsoring an event usually provides possibilities for interviews and short commercials with top athletes attending the event, which can then be posted on social media. Nowadays, very few brands focus exclusively on traditional channels.

However, social media communications are usually free, and brands can always find a way to associate themselves with an event by simply publishing a post to support their national team in a given competition. Use Case #4 depicts how Nike, without being an official sponsor of the 2019 FIFA Women's World Cup, could still associate itself with the event. Social media also has the advantage of being visible for an (almost) indefinite period, and can be accessed at any time of the day. These two aspects massively increase the amount of content and visibility that the brand can have. With social media algorithms, reaching the right target is also easier for brands, as the various platforms analyze users' activity in order to present content that interests them. The downside is that these tools are accessible to all brands, therefore considerably increasing the amount of content the user sees, who can quickly become overwhelmed by the volume of posts.

In this context of mass communication, the effectiveness of brand communication will largely depend on the communication channel used and the quality of the content.





WWC USE CASE

BRAND ASSOCIATION WITHOUT BEING AN OFFICIAL SPONSOR

Nike, which is associated with football apparel and promoting gender equity, was willing to be connected to the 2019 FIFA Women's World Cup, without being an official sponsor. As it did not pay the fee needed to sponsor the World Cup, Nike allowed its biggest competitor Adidas to display its logo on the official ball, in stadiums, and during TV advertisements.

Nike would still be represented in the stadium on the jerseys of national teams it was directly sponsoring, such as the United States, the Netherlands, and England. In order to further its association, Nike used social media to support the athletes and post messages relating to gender equity (see WWC Use Case #6). Nike never mentioned FIFA, the World Cup, or the hashtags associated with it directly in their communications. Instead, they posted communications about girls pursuing their goals, or personal stories of athletes with whom they have contracts.

The strategy proved effective, as Nike was mentioned 52,300 times in communications associated with the World Cup between May and July 2019.



A short video-clip^A released by Nike just after the final win of the American team went viral, and provided great publicity for the brand. The video explained how the national team could change the game and how this should be an inspiration for women to break the glass ceiling and change the world. The short movie was liked 279,000 times and commented on 104,000 times on Twitter.

While Nike's communication campaign during the World Cup was successful, the brand was most importantly also able to attain concrete business objectives. The USA national team jersey became the most sold soccer jersey ever on Nike's website in one season (both men's and women's)—even before the World Cup final^B.

A. Nike. (2019, July 7). Nike | Never Stop Winning. Retrieved from YouTube - Nike: <https://deloi.tt/2TraHPq>

B. Mohamed, T. (2019, June 28). Nike is selling a record number of USA women's soccer jerseys thanks to World Cup fever. Retrieved from Markets Insider: <https://deloi.tt/36VgSz3>

Communication channels

When advertising their brand in relation to a sporting event, brands should firstly define their sponsorship goal and targeted audience, before choosing the most suitable channel to meet its objectives and reach the target audience. Therefore, while general conclusions cannot be drawn as the effectiveness of all communication channels depends on the sponsored event and audience, Use Case #5 provides some insights on the most effective channels for Adidas, Visa, Coca-Cola, and SNCF during the 2019 FIFA Women's World Cup. For these brands, brand visibility was achieved via Twitter, while highest engagement was obtained on Instagram.

[...] firstly define their sponsorship goal and targeted audience, before choosing the most suitable channel to meet its objectives and reach the target audience.

Communication content

With the creation of such a vast amount of content, brands need to be more innovative and impactful in order to stand out and increase visibility. In recent years, brands have developed various strategies to create buzz. British chemical company Ineos developed such a strategy in October 2019 with the “Ineos 1h59 Challenge”, during which Eliud Kipchoge became the first man to run a marathon in under two hours. The company set up special conditions and invited the best runners in the world to take part, so that Kipchoge could beat this record. During the event, seven runners ran at a set pace and position in order to create the best conditions possible for the Kenyan to beat the record. With this setup, Ineos was showing how science and sport, combined with hard work and a goal to beat one's personal record, can result in perfection and historic achievements. The event created a buzz and was reported on globally via traditional and social media. On TV, 49 different channels broadcasted the event in over 200 countries, with an estimated 500 million viewers. On

social media, on the day of the event, the different videos gathered 39.8 million views and an engagement rate of 2.6 million²¹. In addition to brand visibility, the event's setup reinforced Ineos' positioning in the sports market.

With the amount of content being created on the rise, it's vital that it directly catches users' attention. To do so, brands can turn to various methodologies and models, including the “STAR” model put forward by Nancy Duarte²². STAR, which stands for “Something They will Always Remember”, is a method for delivering effective messages to the audience. In order to create impactful messages, the author says that messages should use memorable dramatization, repeatable sound bites, evocative visuals, emotive storytelling and facts that shock. Use Case #6 depicts how these different concepts can be observed in a piece of sports content with the highest engagement rate in 2019.


Figure 2 illustrates the major steps that need to be followed in order to produce effective communication, and decision factors.

Figure 2 – Communication fundamentals for effective sports sponsorship




21. Bailleul, A. (2019, October 14). Opération de communication réussie pour INEOS et Nike grâce au record d'Eliud Kipchoge sous les 2H. Retrieved from SportBuzzBusiness: <https://deloi.tt/2FPBVY6>

22. Duarte, N. (n.d.). Create a S.T.A.R. Moment. Retrieved from Duarte: <https://deloi.tt/2FReCH3>

**WWC USE CASE**

COMMUNICATION CHANNELS USED BY SPONSORING BRANDS

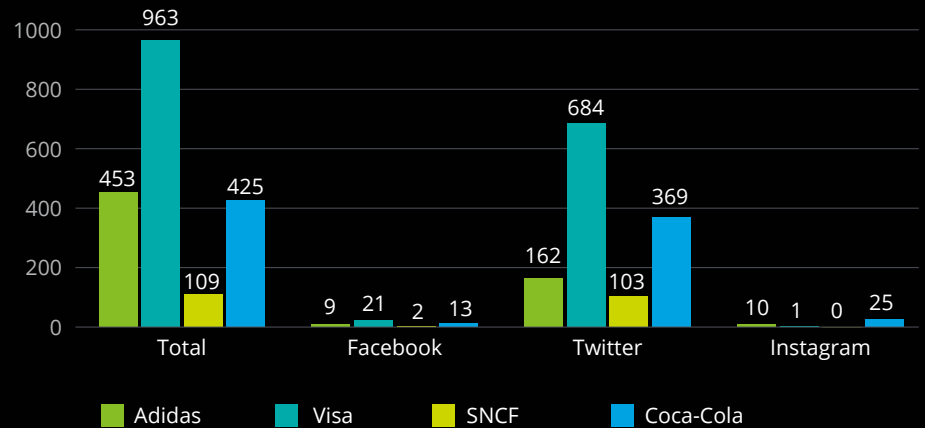
Adidas, Visa, Coca-Cola, and SNCF were four official sponsors of the 2019 FIFA Women's World Cup. While Adidas, Visa, and Coca-Cola are traditional sponsors of such events, it was the first time for SNCF, benefiting from the fact that the tournament was held in France. These companies used different social media platforms to report directly on their sponsoring, in an effort to maximize the impact. In addition, these companies also benefited from content generated from other users, from articles written about World Cup sponsors to images/highlights of the event where their brand logo could be depicted.



Brand generated content

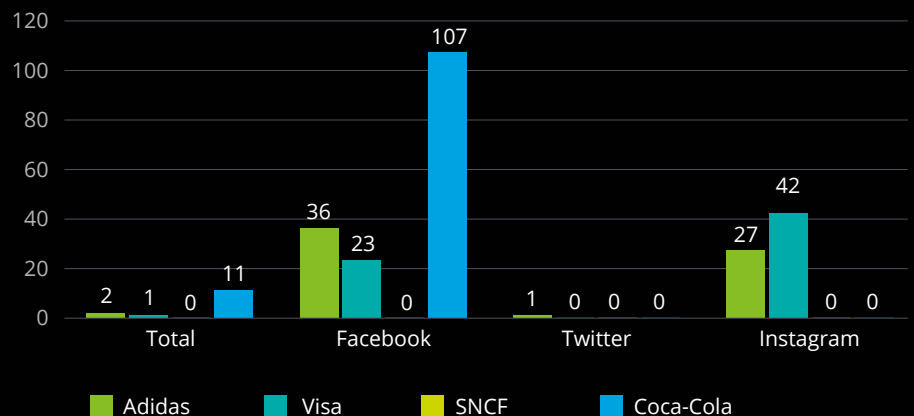
All three brands used social media to report on the event. In total, Adidas, Visa, Coca-Cola, and SNCF published 453, 963, 109 and 425 posts respectively between 1 February and 31 August via their different social media accounts. The brands broadly preferred Twitter over Facebook or Instagram. Coca-Cola and Adidas posted 25 and 10 publications on their Instagram accounts, respectively, while Visa only posted 1 and SNCF not at all.

Generated content



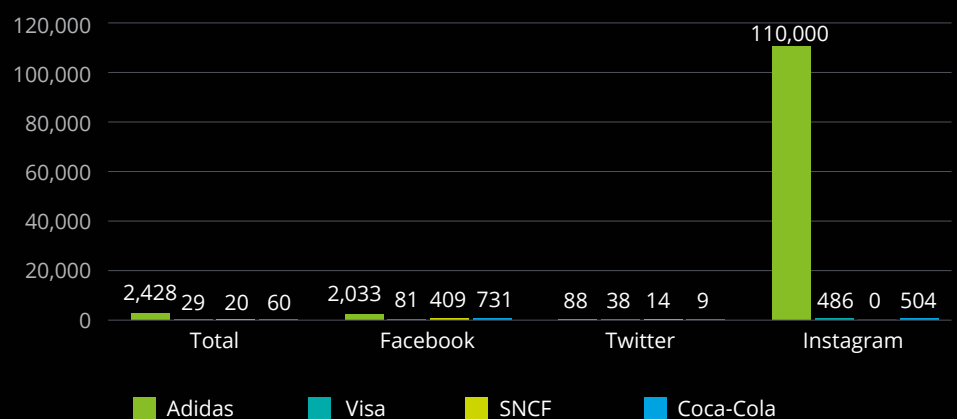
A major objective for brands sponsoring events is to generate some visibility. In order to measure this objective, potential reach is an interesting metric to look at. The chart below depicts the potential reach per piece of content for the different brands. Facebook and Instagram provided interesting reach per piece of content for Adidas, Visa, and Coca-Cola. As a general conclusion, a single post on a social media directly increases the reach to a new potential audience.

Reach per content generated (in million)



The engagement rate also offers some insights into the visibility of brands' communications, as well as people's reactions. With this metric in mind, Instagram generated more likes, comments and shares than other social media platforms. On Instagram, the brand was able to generate genuine interaction, provoking reactions from the audience.

Engagement per content generated



Data provided by Talkwalker s.à.r.l.

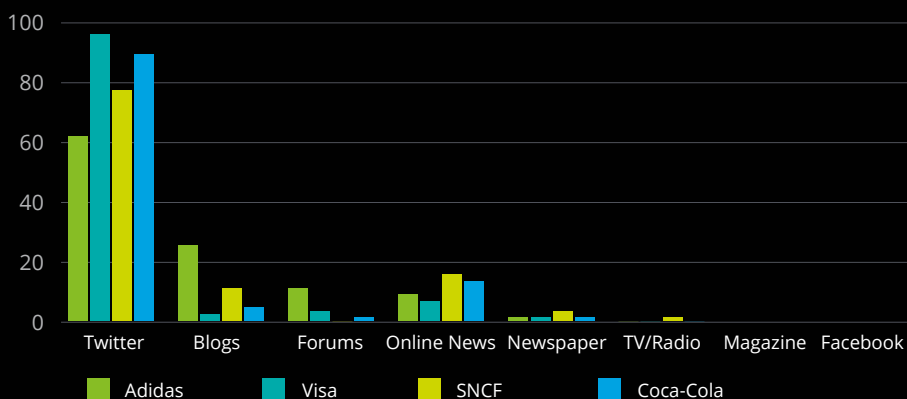


WWC USE CASE

Externally generated content

When sponsoring an event, brands may be linked to the event in content generated by external parties. This is important for brands, as this is another opportunity for them to increase their visibility. Visa, Adidas, Coca-Cola, and SNCF were respectively associated with the event 67,000, 60,000, 21,500 and 2,500 times between 1 February and 31 August. While these four brands were all official sponsors, they weren't in the same sponsor category. While the first three are FIFA partners, SNCF was considered a "national supporter" sponsor. Brands in this category did not have their logo advertised on publicity billboards during interviews, which is a major reason for the lower amount of content associated with the event. Visa and Adidas also had extra rights in comparison to Coca-Cola. At the end of each game, a "Visa Player of the match" was chosen. The Player of the match had to come to the interview, and was given a Visa trophy, which generated a lot of visibility for the brand. At the end of the tournament, the best player, the top scorer, and the best goalkeeper all got a prize: the "Adidas Golden Ball", "Adidas Golden Boot" and "Adidas Golden Glove", respectively. Thanks to the name of these prizes, the brand was widely mentioned on the various media platforms. The following chart illustrates the percentage of mentions per channel for these brands.

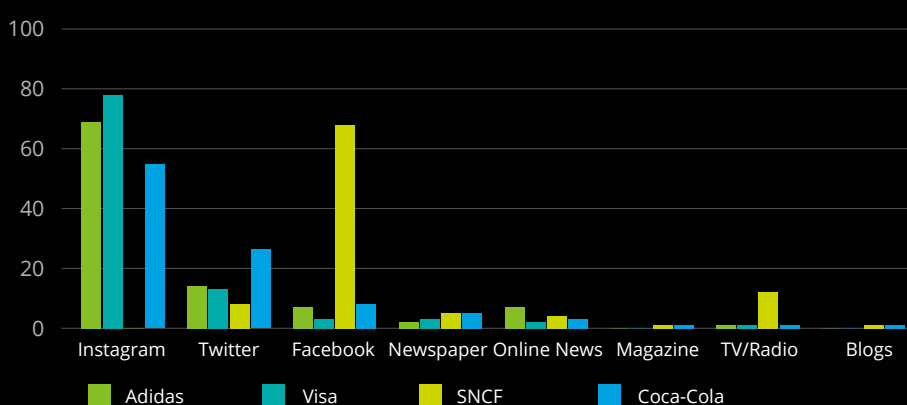
Percentage of mentions per channel



For all brands, Twitter is where the most content could be seen, from 56 percent for Adidas to 87 percent for Visa. Blogs and forums were second, followed by online news. SNCF, which is a smaller brand in comparison to its counterparts, generated 14 percent of its total mentions via online news. Their involvement with the World Cup was well reported by traditional media such as online news and newspapers.

When we look at the engagement rate, we get a different picture: Instagram is again the channel with the most comments, likes and shares, except for SNCF, for which no Instagram content was associated with the event.

Percentage of engagement per channel



Data provided by Talkwalker s.à.r.l.



WWC USE CASE

POWERFUL MESSAGE COMMUNICATION ANALYSIS

In February 2019, Nike posted a short 1 min 30 video clip on Instagram and YouTube, which quickly went viral, called "Dream Crazier", and just with the description "#justdoit"^A. Narrated by tennis player Serena Williams, the video starts by describing people's negative perception about women in sport, and how they are qualified as crazy when passionately pursuing sports, goes on with past accomplishments of famous female athletes and ends with some encouragement to women to fulfil their dreams. The message was one of the first of Nike's messages to support gender equity, a cause that was largely publicised up until the 2019 FIFA Women's World Cup four months later.

The 5 "STAR Moments" can easily be identified in the 90-second video:



Memorable dramatization

Use of dramatic music and words to describe people's perception about female athletes, such as "dramatic, nuts, delusional, unhinged, hysterical, irrational".



Repeatable sound bites

Use of the word "crazy" 11 times



Evocative visuals

Use of videos to illustrate the text, such as athletes crying, shouting, yelling, expressing joy of success



Emotive storytelling

Telling a story that reveals women's challenges in sport and in society, with which many women can relate to



Shocking facts

Women's accomplishments (coaching an NBA team, winning 23 tennis grand slams, landing a double-cork 1080, etc.)

Overall, the video and the text balance out the use of these 5 STAR moments to create a video with a powerful message, reinforcing Nike's image of a company that supports gender equity. The video was well-received by

fans, with 10 million views on YouTube and more than 19 million views on Instagram, with 3.7 million likes and 70,000 comments, making it one of the sport content pieces with the highest engagement rate in 2019.

A. Nike. (2019, February 24). Nike | Dream Crazier. Retrieved from Youtube - Nike: <https://deloi.tt/2Ts9GXs>



Conclusion

Thanks to the technological developments seen over the last few years, sports sponsorship can offer brands even more benefits. The advent of social media enables almost every brand to easily associate itself with an event and reach a target audience. These changes have attracted many brands, crowding the market for major sports. Therefore, brands intending to initiate effective sports sponsorship have now turned to new markets, be it a new sport, discipline or a sport with increasing popularity, in order to stand out from the crowd. Brands also tend to favor sectors with values they want to be associated with. This enables the brand to build a real story with the sport or event being sponsored, and advertise this story to the audience.

Given that audiences are faced with an increasing number of posts, brands need to consider both communication channels and content quality in order to attract people's attention. With the emergence of many new social media platforms, brands have a range of options to reach a greater audience. The channel used will depend on the brand's objective and targeted audience, and innovative content is becoming a necessity if brands wish to stand out.

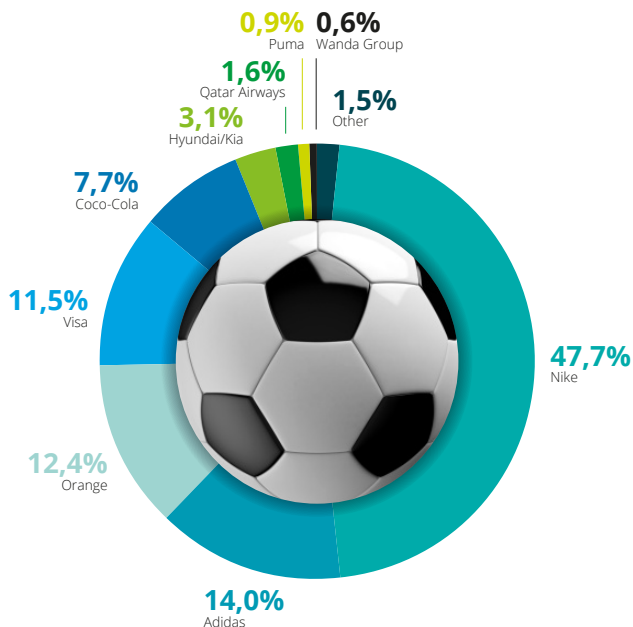
While this report has discussed how brands now need to adapt in order to successfully sponsor a sporting event, it should also be considered how certain sports and events should adapt in order to make themselves more attractive to sponsors. While some changes can be implemented easily, such as adapting the event timing in order to increase audience numbers, this has proved to be more challenging for other players. In new and less stable markets, such as the eSports market, events usually have to reassure brands that the competition has the potential to become a recurring event, and that the brand investment has long-term potential. Particularly in the eSports market, as the popularity of the

video games played at these events tends to be volatile, events have to be innovative in order to provide brands with some reassurance. Certain events have started using a franchise model when organizing competitions, where the competition's existence is contractually assured. The future of a sporting event and sports sponsoring will always depend on the brands' and the events/sports' willingness to adapt, in order to achieve the greatest mutual benefit.

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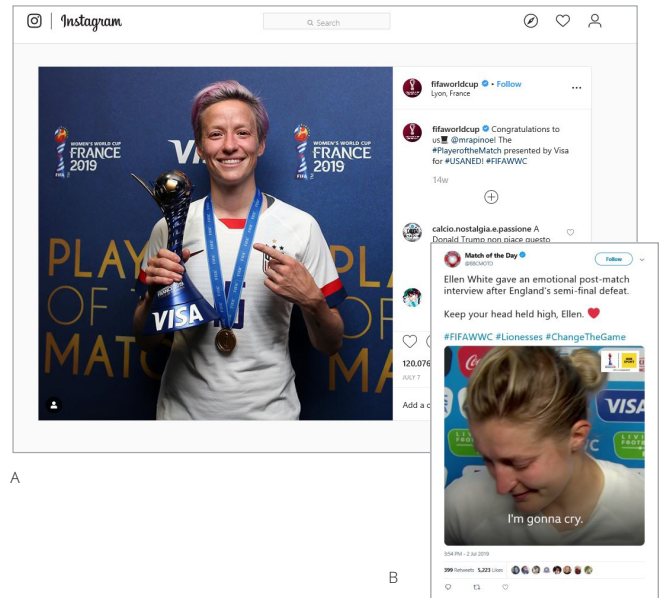
APPENDIX 1

Visa share of voice



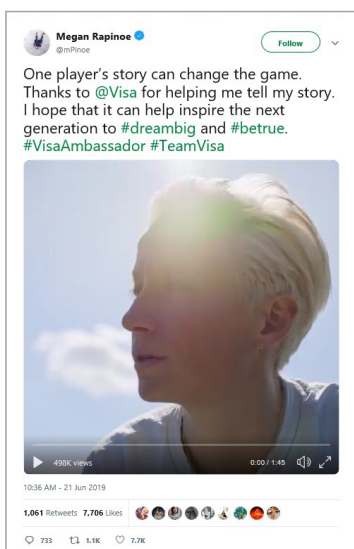
APPENDIX 2

Visa mentions



APPENDIX 3

Visa – Content shared by influencer^C



APPENDIX 4

SNCF hashtag^D



A. <https://deloitte/387caP1>
 B. <https://deloitte/2Nrifjy>
 C. <https://deloitte/2FPP9nR>
 D. <https://deloitte/3adN0jt>

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