Users motivational drives to engage with athletes on social media

Authors:
Videgren Victor 950729
vv222bk@student.lnu.se
Jost Auf Der Stroth, Alexander 950731
aj223ad@student.lnu.se
Mathieu, Jean-Paul 941003
jm222yu@student.lnu.se
Tutor: Viktor Magnusson
Examiner: Åsa Devine
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Authors: Victor Videgren, Alexander Jost Auf Der Stroth, Jean-Paul Mathieu
Supervisor: Viktor Magnusson
Examiner: Åsa Devine

Background: With social media becoming a more and more prominent tool of communication within sports marketing, athletes stand to gain much by implementing it in their branding and marketing efforts. However, existing literature on the matter inclined that further research in which the perspective of the user was taken, thus advancing the understanding of user engagement motivation toward these athletes on social media networks. This study adapted the Uses and Gratifications theory in which six motivational categories had been summarized, these being: Informational, Entertainment, Remunerative, Social, Communicative and Convenience.

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to describe what motivates users to engage with athletes on social media.

Methodology: This work has incorporated a qualitative approach sided with a descriptive purpose. The empirical findings were collected through semi-structured interviews. Furthermore, these findings are coded and analysed by taking inspiration from grounded theory.

Analysis: The empirical data was discussed within six motivational categories and was used to describe existing theory. Through the process of analysis, patterns of motivational theories interrelating with each other emerged. These being, a common interest which led users to engage with athletes, honesty and transparency which is what users saw and appreciated in the athlete and finally, the building of relationship which was what created from the engagement with athletes on social media.

Conclusion: Through the analysis of the motivational drives patterns were discovered regarding users’ motivations to engage with athletes. The three patterns discovered interrelate with each other and are interpreted to be the typical motivation of a user to engage with an athlete on social media. The motivational patterns are “common interests with athlete”, second being the “transparency of athletes” and third “building a relationship”

Keywords: Athlete branding, Social media, Uses and Gratification theory, Motivation, Engagement, Marketing, Grounded theory
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Victor Videgren  Alexander Jost Auf Der Stroth  Jean-Paul Mathieu
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1 Introduction

This introductory chapter discusses the development of social media networks and its growing importance as a tool of communication between athletes and the users of these networks. Moreover, the chapter introduces the Uses and Gratifications theory, which attempts to explain the motivations of “how” and “why” social media users select and consume content on social media networks. Lastly, this chapter presents the problematization revolving around athletes’ brands and user motivation on social media, leading to the purpose and research question of this paper.

1.1 Background

According to Wallace, Wilson and Miloch (2011) social media has an impact on sport advertisement. Through social media, athletes can manage the users brand perception and influence satisfaction in real time (Wallace, Wilson & Miloch, 2011). As social media has grown over the last decades (Statista, 2017) and has become an important way through which people communicate and connect with one another (Anagnostopoulos, Parganas, Chadwick & Fenton, 2018). It has now become a powerful way in which athletes can build a strong brand image and has already been integrated as a substantial part in branding strategies (Anagnostopoulos et al, 2018). Arai, Ko and Ross (2014), stress that the way in which an athlete manages one’s own brand becomes essential and plays a very crucial role in the processes of the career building and the development for the athlete. Furthermore, due to the rise of the roles that sports and athletic efforts have come to play within the modern day society, athletes have gained increased possibilities to achieve the status of an exceptional star, or even a global myth (Bradish, Stevens, Lathrop, 2003; Bruce & Tini, 2008). This can be emphasized by the earnings of athletes which, nowadays, compose of more than only the price money or regular income, they are also having profitable sponsoring contracts to raise their income (Forbes, 2018). It is important in both female and male sports e.g. in 2017 Eugenie Bouchard and LeBron James raised more money through endorsement than winnings or salary of their sports performance (Forbes 2018; Forbes 2, 2018).

This shows the importance for athletes to develop a strong human brand. According to Close, Moulard and Monroe (2011) a human brand can be described as “[...] the persona, well-known or emerging, who are the subject of marketing, interpersonal, or inter-
organizational communications.” (pg. 923). However, even the best athletes, from an athletic standpoint, can miss such opportunities if they do not have a clear brand management strategy for building their brand. Thus, suggesting that the great athletic accomplishments do not equal great famousity (Kristiansen & Williams, 2015; Constantinescu, 2016).

According to Pegoraro (2010), social media has become a large part of the sporting world, it is influencing leagues, teams and athletes and became a highly used platform for athletes to openly communicate with fans. Social media can be defined as tools, platforms and applications which make it possible for people to communicate and connect with one another (Anagnostopoulos et al, 2018). Athletes are looking “[…] to attract fans, gain publicity and ultimately attract sponsorship and lucrative contracts” (Pegoraro, 2010, pg. 512). Therefore, it is important to understand the motivations for users to interact with athletes on social media. As presented by MacInnis, Moorman and Jaworski (1991), motivation is the underlying force which affect individuals to carry out an action. Higgins (2006) further explains that motivation refers to how intensely an individual feels toward something, thus influencing the individual’s desire to act or not to act. Baek, Holton, Harp and Yaschur (2011) found that the underlying level of motivation held by individuals affected their behaviour on social media. This emphasise that by acknowledging the motivations that influences user actions in social communities, athletes can improve the way in which they contribute to these social communities. Further Kilgour, Sasser and Larke (2015) implies that content which did not match together with the users’ motives ran a higher risk of being perceived as intrusive or ignored all together.

Athlete’s social media appearance can be affected by parasocial interaction (Frederick, Lim, Clavio, & Walsh, 2012). Parasocial interaction is a one-way relationship developed by a consumer with someone or a brand’s page on social media, developing a level of intimacy which is actually not real (Sanderson, 2010; Frederick et al. 2012; Jin, 2018.; Kim & Drumwright, 2016). These relationships being developed through a user’s exposure to athletes and human brands through online advertising (Jin, 2018).

Fans, due to the increase of social media, more often “[…] intervene in athletes’ media narratives” (Sanderson, 2010, pg. 449) and “[…] social-media sites become valuable tools for athletes to more directly manage their public presentation.” (Sanderson, 2010, pg. 449) This increase has developed the need to detect the people's motivations to follow athletes on diverse online social media platforms (Frederick et al., 2012). According to Solomon,
Bamossy, Askegaard and Hogget (2013), “Motivation refers to the processes that cause people to behave as they do. From a psychological perspective motivation occurs when a need is aroused that the consumer wishes to satisfy. Once a need has been activated, a state of tension exists that drives the consumer to attempt to reduce or eliminate the need” (Solomon et al, 2013 pg. 185).

In order to examine these motivations, one can apply the Uses and Gratifications Theory, henceforth named UGT, a framework which seeks out to answer why and how people consume mass media from their perspective (Katz & Foulkes, 1962; Dolan, Conduit, Fahy & Goodman, 2015). The theory was first developed to investigate the mass consumption of traditional media channels such as radio, newspapers and television by chartering the needs and wants of these channels users and how these requirements can be gratified by using their channels. However, it has successfully been adapted to newer media outlets such as the Internet and social media networks, which has displayed a higher grade of interactivity with its users (Ku, Chu & Tseng, 2013; Dolan et al., 2015)

1.2 Problem discussion

According to Green (2016) athletes using social media can effectively develop their individual brand value and in so influence their marketability, popularity and commercial opportunities. Moreover, Green (2016) and Anagnostopoulos et al. (2018), have discussed the growing practices of utilizing social media as a tool for branding and communication by athletes. However, these take the perspective of the companies and athletes themselves rather than that of the users. With social media becoming more prominent within the world of sports, being heavily used as a tool for enabling open communication between teams and specific athletes and these networks users (Pegoraro, 2010; Sanderson, 2010; Anagnostopoulos et al., 2018), it has also become clearer that the empowerment that social media brings to its users has grown (Enginkaya, Yilmaz, 2014; Kim & Drumwright, 2016). This empowerment has, according to (Miller & Lammas, 2010) integrated the users of these networks as an active audience which can choose, react and act upon whatever content they want or seem to need.

This then leads to the growing matter of understanding what drives these reactions and actions within social media to occur as this, according to Baek et al. (2011), Stavros, Meng, Westberg and Farrelly (2013) and Kilgour, Sasser and Larke (2015) can have a direct effect on the user behaviour on social media. As social media behaviour could present itself
through an array of different user actions, this study has chosen the word Engage to represent these actions, being for example: showing appreciation by acknowledging, following, communicating and spreading positive information or, in contrast, by ignoring, criticizing and spreading negative information (Tuten & Solomon, 2014).

Today existing literature such as Frederick et al. (2012), Stavros, Men, Westberg and Farrelly (2013) and Vale & Fernandez (2018) have all conducted research which examine the motivational drives that can influence users to engage with users on social media. These studies indicate that the underlying motivations of social media users do have an effect on their behaviour on social media, thus influencing how these users behave and what acts they choose to perform on these networks to enforce it (Frederick et al., 2012; Stavros et al., 2013; Vale & Fernandez, 2018). As also can be seen, although the presented results from these studies present the benefits in utilizing social media as a tool for athletes to create further interaction with their fans, these studies have limited themselves to conduct research within one platform. This study however, will follow their suggestion and will therefore not focus on any specific platform, but rather on social media as a whole as motivational drives can be investigated platform independent. Meaning that this approach is then more similar to the work done by Whiting and Williams (2013) and Dolan et al. (2015) but in the specific context of athletes.

To describe these motivational drives the authors of this paper have decided to use UGT as the basic of the theoretical framework, hence following the perspective of previous studies such as Quan-Haase and Young (2010), Chi, (2011), Whiting and Williams (2013) and Dolan et al. (2015) but in a different context, namely athletes branding on social media. UGT provides an understanding of why and how individuals search for and decide to use specific media to satisfy specific needs (Katz & Foulkes, 1962), and according to Tanta, Mihovilović and Sablić (2014) UGT gives an insight on the motivation for using a particular media channel. Dolan et al. (2015) extracted four categories for motivations on social media: informational, entertaining, remunerative and relational, whereas we will adapt the framework of which are used as the overall dimensions for the examination of the interviews.

This paper aims to bring a greater understanding of what motivates users to engage with athletes on social media networks by conducting the research from the perspective of that of the users, rather than that of a company or an athlete. Thus, bringing a more complete picture of how athletes and sport managers can utilize social media fully in their branding
and marketing pursuits by creating strategies and content that will correspond better with their targeted audience. Furthermore, this paper aims to enrich the scientific field of sport marketing by describing existing theory within the context of engaging with athletes on social media, through the application of a qualitative research design, which is in line with Stavros et al., (2013) and Vale & Fernandez (2018) suggestions.

1.3 Purpose
The purpose of this study is to describe what motivates users to engage with athletes on social media.

1.4 Research question
RQ: How do motivational drives influence users to engage with athletes on social media?
2 Literature review

In this chapter the theoretical foundations of the study can be found. Reviews of the existing literature within the areas of UGT, Social media communication and parasocial interaction are presented and elaborated upon. Here UGT acts as the theoretical basis which explains users motivation and consumption of media. Furthermore, social media communication is the specific medium chosen and parasocial interaction emphasis the observed relationships.

2.1 Uses gratification theory

Uses and Gratifications theory addresses how and why people consume different types of media to satisfy their psychological and social needs, as it “[…] proceeds from the assumption that the social and psychological attributes of individuals and groups shape their use of the mass media rather than vice versa.”, According to Katz and Foulkes (1962, p.378). UGT is one of the first theories that bases its approach out of the user perspective rather than that from the communicator (Aitken, Gray & Lawson, 2008; Ku, Chu & Tseng, 2013) as it posits that the consumers of media are individuals who are actively searching and selecting both media channels and content to satisfy their needs (Ku, Chu & Tseng, 2013).

The authors of this paper have derived six sub-motivations from UGT through a literature review: informational motivations, entertainment motivations, remunerative motivations, social motivations, communicatory motivations and convenience motivations. These being the most prevalent motivational drives used in the literature of UGT (Appendix 1).

2.1.1 Informational motivations

Informational content is the relationship that social media pages have with delivering information whilst advertising their brand, in so users are motivated by their desire to find information using social media (Dolan et al, 2015). The motivational dimensions, detected by Whiting and Williams (2013), information seeking, surveillance or knowledge about others can be included in the category informational motivations. Social media users are seeking out for information, knowledge, pre-purchase information and self-education or inspiration (Muntinga, Moorman & Smit, 2011; Whiting & Williams, 2013). Surveillance or knowledge about others refers to individuals wanting to get information about others and keeping up with one’s social environment (Muntinga, Moorman & Smit, 2011; Whiting & Williams, 2013). It can get to the extent of surveillance meaning users being “nosey”,


“spying on people”, “creeping on people”, “spying on the own kids” and “looking at stuff about others without them knowing about it” (Whiting & Williams, 2013). Quan-Haase and Young (2010) found that curiosity is a motivational factor for using social media. People are interested in finding information about friends, past and future events and other activities (Quan-Haase & Young, 2010). In addition, Chi (2011) points toward the social capital of bridging, which is described as the exchange and spread of information such as ideas and experiences.

2.1.2 Entertainment motivations

Entertaining content refers to how a social media page or brand delivers entertaining or fun media to users (Dolan et al, 2015). According to the authors Dolan et al (2015), entertaining content leads to positive attitudes. Muntinga, Moorman and Smit (2011) and Whiting and Williams (2013) found the motivations to be pass time, entertainment, enjoyment and relaxation. People use social media “when they have idle time or when they are bored and want something to do” (Whiting & Williams, 2013, pg. 366). Social media is used for playing games, listening to music, watching videos and comic relief. Social media is also perceived as relaxing when going through profiles or is used as an escape from reality (Whiting & Williams, 2013). This is supported by Quan-Haase and Young (2010) as they mention that social media is a tool to pass time in the way of having fun, killing time, relaxing and providing an escape from everyday pressure and responsibilities.

2.1.3 Remunerative motivation

Remunerative content regards to social media pages which offer prizes, such as giveaways or draws, remunerative content being content that is thought to reward users (Muntinga, Moorman & Smit, 2011; Dolan et al., 2015). Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004) support this approach and found that “[...] self-interested helpers, appears to be strongly driven by economic incentives. Economic incentives are the second strongest motive for this cluster (behind concern for other consumers), and respondents rated economic incentives the highest among the four clusters” (pg. 49). Furthermore, Muntinga, Moorman and Smit (2011) found indications of remunerative content being a prominent driver with users who mainly sought to consume brand-related content, rather than contributing or creating it, as this particular participation had the chance of leading to some kind of reward.
2.1.4 Social motivation

Social motivations are connected to users desires to interact with others on social media, with creating relationships on social media identified as a motivation for users to use social media (Dolan et al., 2015). Quand-Haase and Young (2010) put forward that people use social media because of peer pressure and social connectivity. Users do not want to be left behind and therefore try to be included in the community, want to know what people are talking about and also keep in touch with others (Quan-Haase & Young, 2010). Muntinga, Moorman and Smit (2011) identified social interaction, social identity and social pressure as motivation for people to engage on social media. These motivations are associated with the active joining of the social media community by uploading of content in order to be seen, to get feedback or the pressure to contribute because of others are doing it. Furthermore, these authors identified the themes self-presentations, self-expression and self-assurance. Self-presentation and self-expression are described as the sharing information about oneself to show off and impress others. Self-expression is social media “used to express and shape one’s identity and/or personality” (Muntinga, Moorman & Smit, 2011, pg. 32). Self-assurance is associated with users contributing content which aims to get recognized by other community members. Social media users are in addition motivated to influence peers or companies and feel empowered by social media to do so (Muntinga, Moorman & Smit, 2011). Whiting and Williams (2013) mention that people use social media for social interaction. Social media provides a place to interact, socialize and giving them a social life. It is used to connect and keep in touch with family and friends. It is also being discussed how people like to express themselves anonymously, like to criticize others and enjoy the opportunity to vent (Whiting & Williams, 2013). Furthermore, Chi (2011), identified social bonding and maintaining as motivational drives. Bonding is associated with emotional engagement with others on whom can be relied on and shares interests and beliefs. Maintaining encounters the maintaining of existing valuable connection through life changes (Chi, 2011). In addition, Thomson (2006) found that “when a human brand enhances a person’s feelings of autonomy and relatedness and does not suppress feeling of competence, the person is likely to become more strongly attached to it” (pg. 104). Autonomy refers to a person feeling independent in the choice of his actions. Moreover, relatedness emphasis the relationship a person has within social media, the need to feel close to others and to belong to a social sphere (Thomson, 2006).
2.1.5 Communicatory motivations

Whiting and Williams (2013) defines the uses and gratifications themes expression of opinion, communicatory utility and information sharing. Social media users express themselves through linking, sharing or commenting postings, photos and comments of others. (Whiting & Williams, 2013). Information sharing is associated to people marketing themselves or their business on social media by sharing information about themselves or their business (Whiting & Williams, 2013). Chi (2011) identified bridging social capital, meaning the exchange and diffusion of information, as a motivator for users to use social media.

2.1.6 Convenience motivations

Convenience utility is mentioned by Whiting and Williams (2013) as motivation for people to use social media. It is described as the easy accessibility of social media, the independence of time, is always available and the ability of getting in touch with a lot of people at one time (Whiting & Williams, 2013).

2.2 Social media communication

Social media has become a powerful way in which users can interact with each other and gives them the opportunity to interact and collaborate with brands (Chi, 2011; Kim, Sohn & Choi, 2011; Frederick et al., 2012; Jin & Phua, 2014; Kim & Drumwright, 2016; Anagnostopoulos et al., 2018). Furthermore, social media has also become a more prominent communication tool by sport teams and athletes which have come to be more frequently used among them (Witkemper, Lim & Waldburger, 2012). Users on social media are exposed to brand information and in so participate on social media voluntarily (Kim & Drumwright, 2016). On some social media sites such as Facebook consumers can pass brand messages onto other users by “liking” or “sharing” or adding someone as a friend (Kim & Drumwright, 2016). According to Kim and Drumwright (2016), how social media has shifted communication into a user- centred form it pressures brands to look for opportunities in social media to obtain consumers engagement. In so marketers on social media must choose between a variety of engagement strategies to gain consumers engagement (Enginkaya, Yilmaz, 2014; Kim & Drumwright, 2016).

According to the authors Kim and Drumwright (2016), through their study of how to build relationships on social media and how relatedness has an impact on this, it was found that
consumers were motivated to participate in brand activities on social media when they were extrinsically motivated. It was also found that high social relatedness contributed to higher future engagement (Kim & Drumwright, 2016). Authors have also conducted studies regarding the effects of social media on consumers behavior, one study from the authors Habibi, Laroche and Richard (2016), sheds light on how the path which a brand choses to take on social media can generate positive benefits for both consumers and the brand. Furthermore, the users motivations for using social media, according to the authors Kim, Sohn and Choi (2011), are “[...] seeking friends, social support, information, entertainment, and convenience” (pg. 370).

2.2.1 Parasocial interaction

As social media is a way in which both brands and users communicate to one another or to each other, there are different relationships that can be built (Frederick et al., 2012; Labrecque, 2014; Kim & Drumwright, 2016; Jin, 2018). Consumers on social media sites build relationships to communicate with one another through “following”, “liking”, “commenting” and “sharing” (Kim & Drumwright, 2016). Parasocial interactions is a one-way relationship that is built by consumers on social media with athletes and social media personas (Frederick et al., 2012; Labrecque, 2014; Kim & Song, 2016; Jin, 2018). Parasocial behavior is developed through an illusion of intimacy with someone (Jin, 2018). The development of this illusion of intimacy is dependent on the brands social presence on social media. According to Jin (2018), a parasocial interaction is developed through a person's social identification with the celebrity.

The study from Jin (2018) focuses on the social media site Facebook conducting two experiments creating insight into parasocial interaction and social identification theory. It was found that parasocial interaction plays a role with users positively perceiving endorsements (Jin, 2018). The authors Kim and Song (2016) conducted online surveys with Twitter users who were following celebrities on the platform. This study found that celebrities, sharing their work-related life and their personal life, increased their social presence on the platform and in so positively affected parasocial interactions (Kim & Song, 2016). The study of Kassing and Sanderson (2009) sheds light upon the parasocial interaction between fans and athletes, they emphasise that parasocial interactions are a large factor causing fans to interact with athletes on social media. According to Labrecque (2014), to fully understand how consumers and brand relationships are shaped on social media parasocial interaction theory needs to be used.
3 Method

This methodological chapter will present and justify the chosen approach of research in the study. It includes the description of the chosen elements such as the research design, the empirical data collection and analysis methods. This is then followed by a discussion revolving the quality and the ethical considerations of the study. The end of this chapter summarises all the chosen paths of this paper.

3.1 Research approach

According to Bryman and Bell (2011) in scientific research, the choice to apply a more deductive approach or a more inductively inclined perspective, will determine the nature of the research. Bryman and Bell (2011) and Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2014) states that the deductive approach encompasses the testing of theories put forward by the researcher, which are built on previous scientific research. In addition, Bryman and Bell (2011) also explains that in contrast to the inductive approach, a deductive approach is often used with the purpose of describing and explaining a phenomenon, rather than exploring and discovering it.

As the phenomenon of UGT is already researched in the area of branding on social media, the authors decided to describe the existing theories within a new context, namely the users motivations to engage with athletes on social media. Therefore, a more deductive approach will be applied.

Furthermore, in the research process, researchers should distinguish between a qualitative and a quantitative data collection. Qualitative data collection emphasizes words whereas quantitative focus on quantifiable data collection and analysis (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

Most researchers in the area of athlete branding have conducted quantitative research (Wallace, Wilson & Miloch, 2011; Witkemper, Lim & Waldburger, 2012; Kim & Drumwright, 2016; Jin, 2018) and few considered a qualitative approach such as Djafarova and Trofimenko (2018). Therefore, this study is using a qualitative method as suggested by (Wallace, Wilson & Miloch, 2011; Stavros et al., 2014; Vale & Fernandez, 2018) aiming to gather in-depth knowledge about the motivations of social media users to engage with athletes on social networks in order to describe the existing theories in the new context.
3.2 Research design

According to Bryman and Bell (2011) a research design is the framework for collecting and analyzing data, with the choice of research design affecting the range of dimensions of the research process. With the aim of this study being to describe the motivations of users to engage with athletes on social media a descriptive research design is the most suitable. Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2014) discuss the different research designs functioning to answer your purpose and research questions. With there being differences between exploratory and descriptive research designs. According to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2014) an exploratory research design is studying a situation of problem in order to assess a phenomenon in a new light. Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2014) also give the example “collect qualitative data to explain the reasons why customers of your company rarely pay their bills according to the prescribed payment terms” (Pg. 134). The exploratory research design is used to understand behavior and meaning of that behavior in its specific social context (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2014). Whereas descriptive research is where the research’s purpose is to develop accurate representation of people, events or situations (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2014). With descriptive research according to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2014) it is necessary to paint a clear picture of what data the researchers wish to collect before the actual data collection. Nevertheless, a descriptive study, although often the case, should not be seen as merely a description of a something. It should rather be seen as a foundation of which further research can be continued on, being a precursor to further exploration, or a part of an explanation (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2014).

In this study the purpose is to describe the motivations of users to engage with athletes on social media. Studies conducted in this research field such as Frederick et al (2012) and Vale & Fernandez (2018) pinpointed that further research in how users choose to engage with athletes on social media is warranted for in order to give more nuance in the area “[...]future qualitative studies could gain more in-depth insights about this phenomenon in order to further articulate fans’ viewpoints and experiences” (Vale & Fernandez, 2018, pg.50). With this in mind, this could be done with a descriptive research design as it allows for the unearthing and description of the phenomena in order to further advance the knowledge within the field (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2014). However, to describe users motivational drives to engage with athletes on social media this research will be focusing on descriptive research design. As there is a need to understand the
users motivational drives, in so a descriptive research design can accurately portray a “profile or persons, events or situations” (Robson, 2002 cited from Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2014 pg. 134).

3.3 Data source
There are two types of data sources, primary data and secondary data (Bryman & Bell, 2011). According to Bryman and Bell (2011) primary data is data which is collected specifically for the research project that is being undertaken, whereas secondary data is the data that is being used in a research but has been collected for another purpose. According to the authors Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2014) researchers must consider their research questions, objectives and research strategy when choosing the data source. The data source is dependent on the chosen research design, research questions and objectives sought to be accomplished (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2014). In so, with research aiming on shedding light or obtaining in depth knowledge about a particular subject semi structured and unstructured interviews can gather valid and trustworthy data (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2014). However, according to Bryman and Bell (2011), collecting secondary data can be less time consuming than the collection of primary data. This is due to how the collection of secondary data can be done through a wide range of different sources ranging from personal documents to newspaper articles. Whereas the collection of primary data can be time consuming or costly depending on the purpose of the research (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2014).

As this research is focusing on describing users motivational drives to engage with athletes on social media in a new context, primary data has been chosen to be collected. Despite the negatives surrounding the collection of primary data such as the amount of time needed to collect and analyze the data (Bryman & Bell, 2011), primary data is needed to be collect in order to fully describe the users motivations. The primary data will be collected because of the lack of secondary data within the new context of users motivations to engage with athletes on social media.

3.4 Data collection method
Semi-structured interviews are in comparison to structured interviews, according to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2014), not as standardized, thus enabling for greater freedom during the data collection, while on the other hand, it is neither as unconstrained as
the unstructured way of conducting interviews. Data collection through semi-structured interviews includes an interview guide for the researcher to follow, which bring forward questions of importance and direct the researcher through the interview (Bryman & Bell, 2011). However, even though a guide is present, the interview leader is not constrained to follow it rigorously but can rather use it as a tool for reference.

With different ways in which one can conduct interviews, each type of interview has both advantages and disadvantages. Semi-structured interviews have an advantage when a researcher is wanting to understand interviewees own perspectives when comparing to structured interviews (Bryman & Bell, 2011). This is due to how in quantitative research structured interviews are used with strict structure in order to generalize the data however, in qualitative research there is much more interest in the interviewees point of view with structured interviews not invoking the interviewee to fully share their thoughts (Bryman & Bell, 2011). According to Taylor, Bogdan and DeVault (2016) the first problem is that “people say and do different things in different situations” (p.105). This is because an interview is such a particular kind of situation, it cannot be assumed that a person says in an interview what this person believes or says in another situation. Some researchers are especially critical toward the problem of attitude and public opinion, which emphasis that people have predetermined fixed attitudes they follow in any given situation (Taylor, Bogdan & DeVault, 2016). Secondly, informants can be unable or unwilling to articulate many important things and this can lead to the misunderstanding of the informants language (Taylor, Bogdan & DeVault, 2016). Given this limitation Taylor, Bogdan and DeVault (2016) points out the importance of creating a comfortable atmosphere to talk freely.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview Matrix</th>
<th>Structured Interviews</th>
<th>Semi Structured Interviews</th>
<th>Unstructured Interviews</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advantages</td>
<td>- Advantageous for research towards generalizability (Bryman &amp; Bell, 2011)</td>
<td>- Interview process is flexible (Bryman &amp; Bell, 2011)</td>
<td>- Interview process is flexible (Bryman &amp; Bell, 2011)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disadvantages</td>
<td>- Interview process is inflexible (Bryman &amp; Bell, 2011)</td>
<td>- Ethical considerations need to be taken into account (Bryman &amp; Bell, 2011).</td>
<td>- Informal, similar to a conversation with a person (Bryman &amp; Bell)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Fixed questions so interviewees cannot fully express their thoughts (Bryman &amp; Bell, 2011)</td>
<td>- Data can be subjective (Bryman &amp; Bell, 2011)</td>
<td>- Data can be subjective (Bryman &amp; Bell, 2011)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.1: Advantages and disadvantages of: Structured, Semi-structured and Unstructured interviews

According to Taylor, Bogdan and DeVault (2016) in-depth interviews are aiming to towards the understanding of the informants perspective on their lives, experiences, or situations expressed in their own words. The interviewee serves as observer in a matter that cannot be directly observed by the researchers itself. Researchers can sacrifice the depth of the interviews in order to get more variation and to encounter several interviews with different settings of people and places (Taylor, Bogdan & DeVault, 2016). Through semi structured interviews it gives the researcher the flexibility in order to ask probing questions which are questions which are following up what has been said through questioning (Bryman & Bell, 2011).
Semi-structured interviews are the most suitable data collection method for this research, as rich data can be collected surrounding the users motivations to engage with athletes on social media. Due to the flexibility of semi-structured interviews (Bryman & Bell, 2011) the researchers will ask probing questions to the interviewees in order to extract all data required.

3.5 Sampling

According to Taylor, Bogdan and DeVault (2016) sampling in interviewing can be flexible. The number and type of informants do not have to be specified beforehand. The researchers can start out with a general idea of whom to interview and how to find them but has to be willing to change course after initial interviews (Taylor, Bogdan & DeVault, 2016). The sample size is something that should be determined towards the end (Taylor, Bogdan & DeVault, 2016). Where sample size is depending on data saturation, where through the collection of data there are no new themes being observed (Guest, Bunce & Johnson, 2006). According to the authors Guest, Bunce and Johnson (2006) through their investigation of non-probability sampling techniques found that saturation is found within the first 12 interviews.

In this study the authors are going to use the purposeful sampling method (Koerber & McMichael, 2008) also called purposive sampling by Bryman and Bell (2011). Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling technique used in qualitative research, meaning that the sample is not chosen on random basis (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Where probability sampling techniques are used in order to randomly select participants for given data collection method in order to find a representative sample (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Probability sampling techniques such as simple random sample and systematic sample are often employed by quantitative researchers in order to generalize their study (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Whereas purposeful sampling is aiming for variation within the range by their purpose (Higginbottom, 2004). Koerber and McMichael (2008) emphasis the need of adequate detail about the purpose in selecting the sample. It needs to be stated in how the researchers are selecting their sample to fulfil the purpose (Koerber & McMichael, 2008). In addition to purposeful sampling, snowball sampling is included in this study, this is suggested by Bryman and Bell (2011). Snowball sampling is a method to select people through a small group of people relevant and use these contacts to establish contact with others (Bryman & Bell, 2011).
It has been shown that the younger generations of people in Sweden use social media more than the older generation, with most respondents using social media being between the ages of 16-26 (Statista, 2016). Therefore, the researchers of this study have chosen to interview university students. In so for this research 5 male and 4 female university students who “follow” an athlete on social media have been taken into consideration to be used in the selected sample for this research.

In table 3.2 below it showcases the codes generated for each interviewee, this was done in order to quote the interviewee’s and still keeping the interviewee’s identity anonymous.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interviewee 1</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewee 2</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewee 3</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewee 4</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewee 5</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewee 6</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewee 7</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewee 8</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewee 9</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 3.2: Interviewee coding table*
3.6 Operationalization

According to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2014) an operationalization is a translation of concepts, theories and ideas into tangible meanings. This procedure is done in order for the research to transform from an abstract level into a concrete one. For this to happen, an operationalization requires one or several indicators that would act as a “representative” for the concept.

In the following table the different concepts and theories are broken into the motivations and sub-motivations. Furthermore, the motivations are attached to the questions in the interview guide (Appendix 2). This aids the researchers to structure the execution of the interviews with the individual respondents in order to gain as much in-depth knowledge within the different motivations as possible.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motivations</th>
<th>Sub-Motivations</th>
<th>Conceptual definition</th>
<th>Sources</th>
<th>Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Informational Motivations | - Curiosity  
- Information seeking  
- Surveillance/Knowledge  
- Informational Content  
- Information       | The motivations that drives people to inform themselves about an athlete.            | Quan-Haase and Young (2010); Chi (2011); Kim, Sohn and Choi (2011); Muntinga, Moorman and Smit (2011); Whiting and Williams (2013); Dolan et al. (2015) | Q 1, Q 2.1, Q 2.2, Q 2.3, Q 2.4, Q 2.5, Q 2.6, |
| Entertainment Motivations | - Entertainment  
- Having fun  
- Kill time  
- Relaxation  
- Escapation | The motivational force that drive users to seek out and engage in social network platforms and content to fulfil their need for entertainment, fun or killing time. | Quan-Haase and Young (2010); Kim, Sohn and Choi (2011); Muntinga, Moorman and Smit (2011); Whiting and Williams (2013); Dolan et al. (2015) | Q 1, Q 3.1, Q 3.2, Q 3.3, |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Remunerative Motivations</th>
<th>- Giveaways</th>
<th>The driving force behind users intentions to engage in social network platforms or content that fulfil the need of rewarding, both monetary or non-monetary gains.</th>
<th>Muntinga, Moorman and Smit (2011); Dolan et al. (2015)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Prizes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Economic incentives</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Contribution</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Creating</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Motivations</td>
<td>- Relatedness</td>
<td>The motivations that users have to seek out and fulfil their needs of social relationships and interactions with people on social network platforms.</td>
<td>Thomson (2006); Quan-Haase and Young (2010); Chi (2011); Kim, Sohn and Choi (2011); Muntinga, Moorman and Smit (2011); Whiting and Williams (2013); Dolan et al. (2015)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Autonomy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Peer pressure</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Social connectivity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Relational content</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Bonding</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Maintaining</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Personal identity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Integration and social interaction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Seeking friends</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Social support</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communitary Motivations</td>
<td>- Expression of opinion</td>
<td>Motivational force that drive users toward expression of opinions, social empowerment and information sharing on social network platforms.</td>
<td>Chi (2011); Muntinga, Moorman and Smit (2011); Whiting and Williams (2013)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Communicatory utility</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Information sharing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Empowerment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convenience Motivations</td>
<td>- Convenience utility</td>
<td>The force that motivates users towards using social network platforms for convenience reasons.</td>
<td>Kim, Sohn and Choi (2011); Whiting and Williams (2013)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 3.3 Operationalization*
3.7 Execution of semi-structured interviews

The authors were recruiting possible respondents via instant messaging application platforms. Within the first contact the respondents were introduced to the research topic and the first control questions about their interests in sports and if they are following at least one athlete on social media. The introduction to the topic was aiming to distinguish if the respondents are interested in being part of the research as well as it has implicitly given them the opportunity to think about the interview content beforehand.

The interviews were conducted with the interviewees individually by every researcher. To be able to transcribe all interviews accurately, the researchers took notes during the interview. In addition, all interviews were audio recorded. The interview started off by explaining the research topic and asking the control questions, which are aiming to evaluate how well the respondents fit into the defined sample of this research. Furthermore, Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2014) emphasize the importance to build a comfortable atmosphere for the respondent in order to increase the possibility to get him or her to talk freely. Therefore, the authors were asking some background questions which are constructed to be easy to answer. These questions also help the authors to get more knowledge about the respondent. After the introductory questions the relevant questions were asked to the respondent. Firstly, a question to see what motivations come up from the respondent immediately when thinking of motivations to engage with athletes on social media. Afterwards, the authors asked deeper questions within the six motivational categories: informational motivations, entertainment motivations, remunerative motivations, social motivations, communicatory motivations and convenient motivations. Open questions about each category, the goal was to let the participant express his or her mind and discuss their thought of motivations towards athletes. In addition, the researcher assisted the respondent with asking probing questions surrounding the identified sub-motivations in this paper, given the lack of ability to articulate of the respondent. To end the interview session the participant was asked if he or she has anything to add which came up during the interview and what could be missing.

The location for conducting the interviews was also chosen according to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2014) the most convenient for the respondent that he or she is feeling comfortable, hence some interviews were hold in the apartment of the participant as well as the researchers, always with a mutual agreement between the two parties.
3.8 Pre-testing

A pre-testing of the interviews is generally recommended before conducting the actual empirical data collection in order to ascertain the flow, quality and trustworthiness of the interview guide and the interviews themselves (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Furthermore, Bryman and Bell (2011) describes pre-testing as not only a way that detect and determine flaws or areas of improvement but also allows for the researcher to get more confident in the role as a moderator. It is also critical to assess the interview questions with a third party on basis of ethical considerations in order to avoid possible harm to the respondents as well as the interviewee (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

The interview guide was reviewed and approved by an expert. After the approval the interview guide was pre-tested with an individual within the sample of this study. The pre-test was conducted with all three researchers present, with one of the researchers asking the interview questions and conducting the interview. The interview was recorded. One researcher was responsible for reviewing the participants reactions towards the questions being asked and the other researcher was responsible for memo writing. Writing down anything important that would be compared with the recording of the interview. At the end of the interview the participant was asked how they felt about the interview questions and ethical considerations. Through the pre-test a few changes were made to questions which the interviewee had difficulty understand in order to obtain superior data from the interviews.

3.9 Data analysis method

A common way to analyze the gathered empirical data in research with a qualitative nature is coding, the process of massing together and sorting the gathered material into commonalities such as themes, ideas and concepts. According to Corbin and Strauss (2015), this allows for the processing and refinement of the gathered data, which Bryman and Bell (2011) stress should be reflected and theorized upon.

This research paper was inspired by grounded theory in its process of analysis of the gathered data. The gathered empirical data was coded in relation to the theories that have been presented in the literature review. Charmaz (2006), Bryman and Bell (2011) and Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2014) describes that when coding data, which is of qualitative nature, the representation and matter of the data as well as the categorical relation of the data are all elements that should be highly reflected upon. Coding according
to the author Charmaz (2006) is where “you define what is happening in the data and begin to grapple with what it means” (pg. 46). Charmaz (2006) discusses the process of coding, which starts with initial coding or open coding where the researchers stick closely to the collected data keeping the codes open in order to analyse the codes. The following step is focusing on sifting through the codes, where the most relevant or frequent codes are kept in order to ease the processes of categorization and analysis. The third step then, is to divide the sifted, open codes into axial codes, which could be seen as a dimension, or grouping of related codes. This is done in order to encompass meaning within several codes by sorting and synthesizing them. The final step, selective coding, refers to the process of creating a single meaning which contain all the characteristics of the axial codes and form a single meaning out of them (Charmaz, 2006). This step of selective coding is used to focus the axial codes by categorizing the most significant codes in order to analyze the data (Charmaz, 2006).

Coding is conducted in this research as the semi-structured interviews were diligently transcribed from the audio recordings, as suggested by Bryman and Bell (2011) and Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2014). Where the researchers used open coding, axial coding and selective coding in order to fully describe and analyze the collected data. Firstly, all the interviews were coded within the six categories derived from existing theory, namely, informational motivations, entertainment motivations, remunerative motivations, social motivations, communicatory motivations and convenience motivations. In the second step the codes were gathered together in a table divided by the categories. The third step, axial coding, consisted of connecting the codes and building groups of codes which are related to each other. In the fourth step, the axial codes were clustered together and described by a sentence or term with which the codes are associated with called selective coding. The coding of the empirical data is presented in Appendix 3.

3.10 Research quality

Within research it is important to establish criteria in order to assess the quality of research (Bryman & Bell, 2011). “Reducing the possibility of getting the answer wrong means that attention has to be paid to two particular emphasis on research design: reliability and validity.” (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2014, pg. 149). With qualitative research reliability and validity have somewhat different criteria than quantitative research, it is discussed by the author Robson (2002) this is needed due to how reliability and validity is
needed to be shaped in order to work with the appropriate conditions and circumstances of flexible design research. Furthermore, Bryman and Bell (2011) describe trustworthiness to be important within the execution of qualitative research. Especially, the dependability was taken into consideration for this study which is parallels partly with reliability.

3.10.1 Reliability and Trustworthiness

According to the authors Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2014) reliability is “[...]the extent to which your data collection techniques or analysis procedures will yield consistent finding” (pg. 149). A threat to the reliability of one's research is “observer error” (Robson, 2002). This is an error that can occur during data collection of interviews when there are more than one researcher asking questions, without structure researchers can elicit answers differently in different interviews (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2014). This leads to errors with the data as it would mean that one interviewee would be answering different questions. To avoid this threat to reliability the authors will be conducting semi structured interviews as recommended by the authors Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2014) adding more structure to an interview will decrease this risk to reliability issues. This threat has been taken into consideration by the researchers by creating an interview guide which will be followed during the conduction of interviews.

Furthermore, according to the authors Bryman and Bell (2011), there are different quality criteria when assessing qualitative studies rather than reliability. With this research and the conduction of semi-structured interviews, dependability from the qualitative research criteria of trustworthiness has been considered. With dependability being described by the authors Bryman and Bell (2011) as a parallel of reliability in quantitative research (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Where dependability is where researchers need to take a “auditing” approach, ensuring that there are complete records of all phases of the research process including the conduction of interviews, data analysis and coding of the data (Bryman & Bell, 2011)

To increase the reliability of the information being collected the authors Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2014) suggest that the approach to questioning needs to be taken into consideration. In so, the researchers have taken the wording of the questions into consideration during the conduction of the interviews in so that the interviewees can fully understand the questions and fully express themselves. The dependability of research has been taken into consideration as the researchers showcase the empirical clearly in the empirical chapter and describe the coding process of the empirical data.
3.10.2 Validity

According to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2014) validity is concerned with if or if not, the findings are actually answering what is set out to be answered. Furthermore, due to its flexible nature the truthfulness, or validity, in qualitative research is very hard to determine (Robson & McCartan, 2016). Therefore, the author Maxwell (2012) claims that with validity in qualitative research there are different types of threats to validity. Description being a threat to validity in qualitative research as it is with the inaccuracy or incompleteness of the collected data (Robson & Mccartan, 2016). This inaccuracy or incompleteness occurs with collected data when researchers of an interview recall something different from an interview affecting the collected data negatively. Robson and Mccartan (2016) suggest that audio or video recording of interviews should be carried out, in order to not rely on memory to recall what was said in an interview.

The researchers of this study have considered these issues within validity and in so will have audio recordings of all conducted interviews in order to obtain more reliable data and not shape the data depending on researchers memory. In this research pre-testing has also been conducted, asking an expert to examine the questions and conducting a pre-test interview in order to increase validity. Another step taken to strengthen the validity of the research is create an operationalization showing all the theories presented and how they are correlating with the questions being asked in the interviews.

3.11 Ethical and societal considerations

According to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2014) research ethics is the appropriateness of the researchers behavior in relation to the rights of the people being subject to the research or affected by the research. Therefore, one needs to ensure that the methodology is morally defensible to all the participants involved (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2014). The authors Orb, Eisenhauer and Wynaden (2001) state that ethical principles can be used to guide researchers in addressing issues arising from qualitative research, to maintain the rights of the participants in order to meet the goals of the research. Silverman (2016) remind that qualitative researchers potential to harm is rather moderate, however there needs to be external control.

In so, according to Bryman and Bell (2011) there are four main areas of ethical principles that should be controlled. These are: “whether there is harm to participants; Whether there
is a lack of informed consent; whether there is an invasion of privacy; whether deception is involved” (Bryman & Bell, 2011 pg. 128). With harm to participants, harm can entail several different facets including: physical harm, harm to participants self-esteem, stress, harm to career prospect for future employment and inducing subjects to perform reprehensible acts (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Bryman and Bell (2011) also discuss the ramifications of the results of one’s study, if the results from the study impact people's behaviors it will lead to societal issues. With this the authors have taken societal issues into consideration by considering the possible societal harm that could be caused through one's research and aiming towards keeping the research scientifically sound.

According to Bryman and Bell (2011) if confidentiality or anonymity is requested it must be honored by the researchers, meaning the researchers must work towards that the participant or participants cannot be identified. This has taken into consideration in this study by taking all responsible precautions to ensure that there is no harm to the participants of the study by keeping the identities and records confidential in so increasing anonymity. This has been done through the coding of the participant, as to not reveal any information regarding the interviewee past their age and gender.

### 3.12 Methodology summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Chosen path</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research approach</td>
<td>Deductive and Qualitative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research design</td>
<td>Descriptive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data source</td>
<td>Primary Data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data collection method</td>
<td>Semi-structured interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sampling</td>
<td>Purposeful sampling and snowball sampling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data analysis method</td>
<td>Inspiration from Grounded Theory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research quality</td>
<td>Reliability, trustworthiness and validity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethical and societal considerations</td>
<td>Harm to participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of informed consent</td>
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<td>Invasion of privacy</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Deception of participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Confidentiality/ anonymity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.4: Methodology summary
4 Empirical investigation

This chapter presents the empirical data that has been collected from 9 semi structured interviews. The chapter has been divided into six sub chapters: Informational motivations, Entertainment motivations, Remunerative motivations, Social motivations, Communicatory motivations and Convenience motivations. This structure has been chosen to present the empirical data as accurate and transparent as possible. The final part of this chapter is a summary of the most interesting responses from each motivational drive.

4.1 Informational motivations

The interviewees of the semi structured interviews were asked about their informational motivations when engaging with athletes on social media. The interviewees discussed what different information from athletes social media presence they are seeking for, why they are seeking for it and how the interviewees feel about athletes being informational sources. Interviewees were mentioning that they seek information regarding the athletes personal life, their sports performance or a combination of both.

“I am looking for information regarding her personal life, her competitions and also other athletes.” - Interviewee 7

“I do search for information about their performance, where they play the next game or tournament.” - Interviewee 1

“I would say that I usually follow athletes to see how they live their life.” - Interviewee 2

Through the discussion surrounding the information that users gain from athletes, interviewees discussed how they felt about social media being a good source for getting information about athletes. Knowledge that users gain from athletes on social media came into the discussion with interviewees, with the user's learning nutritional recipes or wanting to improve their life and own skills or practice. The interviewees continued discussing information that they seek and gain from athletes, with a interviewees describing that social media is a good informational source about athletes as the athletes can show their progress in their time off other medias such as TV.
“Social media gives me more insight in certain sports which are not broadcasted on TV so much, like some Olympic disciplines. Now, I can see how the athletes prepare themselves by what they share on social media.” - Interviewee 6

Surrounding the information that users seek for from athletes on social media, interviewee 8 mentioned that she wants to see the athletes post about their travels and how they interact with fans, as they feel that it makes the user feel connected to the athlete posting the information.

“I like it when they travel, meet fans, try out fun activities. I believe it's a way for me to experience those things as well.” - Interviewee 8

As the discussion continued the interviewees continued to discuss what information they are searching for from athletes when the discussion turned for two interviewees when they started to discuss how they feel about athletes being informational sources. The need for an athlete to be transparent with their information came up within the discussion with a few interviewees. It was expressed by interviewees there is a need for honesty from athletes on social media, with athletes needing to think about what they post. With the athletes being informational sources some interviewees expressed how it can be both good and bad depending on the kind of information the athlete is spreading. With the athlete needing to spread positive information and not spread misinformation such as ineffective training advice or poor nutritional advice.

“It could lead to misinformation, if they are giving recommendations on training or nutrition that can hurt you or are ineffective.” - Interviewee 9

4.2 Entertainment motivations

Furthermore, as the interview proceeded, a discussion revolving the interviewees motivation in seeking out entertainment by engaging with athletes on social media networks. In this discussion, questions regarding what type of content they expect from the athletes when seeking entertainment on these networks and also why they sought for entertainment provided by these athletes in the first place.
In their search for entertainment, interviewees often expected content which had to do with how the athletes performed whether it was in a competition, during a championship or whilst training. Here, the discussion revolved around the presented feats of the athletes and how they present their performance within the sport on their social media networks. For example, during this discussion interviewee 4 stated that:

“When you think of entertainment you usually think of, well with football, you think of things that are a bit off, if they score a lot of goals, like oh that doesn't usually happen, something out of the ordinary. If something extra arousing happens i would be entertained by that. For example, if he scored a hat trick and then posted a picture with like 3 or something like that, that would entertain me.” - Interviewee 4

However, content presenting the lifestyle of athletes also showed to be entertaining for the interviewees. For example, Interviewee 6 found the lifestyle of a specific athlete entertaining as this athlete according to the Interviewee “[...] posts crazy stuff of his lifestyle and all around that.” - Interviewee 6

In addition, the possibility to be able to interact with the athletes and their community directly also showed to be a way to find entertainment. Such interaction could be regarding discussions around topics where the community, athlete and the interviewees all could participate.

“I usually write comments or direct messages to athletes and ask for tips or start discussions around topics I find interesting.” - Interviewee 6

But like interviewee 7 stated, these interactions could also take forms such as encouraging conversations or comments made to cheer athletes on or to create a sort of shared team spirit between the athlete, its community and the interviewee itself.

“I usually write comments on athletes that show their progress, cheering them on or asking them things.” - Interviewee 7
With the discussion advancing to why the interviewees seek entertainment by engaging with athletes on social media, it was shown that the interviewees sought after something that aroused them, something that was out of the ordinary. As mentioned by interviewee 4, social media was an outlet that enabled athletes to show extraordinary athletic feats in a personalized manner as these athletes could create and share this content themselves.

“I seek entertainment to find something extraordinary that I wouldn’t usually see on normal media outlets.” - Interviewee 4

Moreover, interviewee 5 stated by engaging with athletes on social media the motivation to seek entertainment in content displaying both the performance and the lifestyle of the athletes she engages with, further explaining that the perspective of the athlete rather than that of third parties is more interesting.

“I guess the sports they do, I would be entertained to see what sports they do and a little bit about their lifestyle because usually you just hear about them in the media, it’s nice to see things from their perspective. To get to know them even though you actually don’t know them.” - Interviewee 5

Interviewee 8 expressed that for her entertainment from athletes could be multiple things with the sport that they play being an important aspect however, it can be other things, as she expressed that she wants to see what is happening “behind the scenes”. With her expressing that entertainment can be seeing content from athletes doing everyday things such as what they are eating or doing to relax.

“Sometimes it might be sports but mostly i would like to see stuff that goes on behind the scenes. It might even be moments when they are sitting on the bench and dont play, or things about what they eat or do.” - Interviewee 8

These social networks also allow for instantaneous gratifications which could be reached at nearly all times. It is a way of finding entertaining content created by the athlete which also enables its users to react and interact. According to Interviewee 8, roaming these networks and keeping updated is easy and can make the time pass or even improve her mood.
“It’s an easy way to be entertained right? You just go into the app and see what they are up to, most of the time it's a way to get in a good mood or to make the time pass.” - Interviewee 8

4.3 Remunerative motivations
The questioning surrounding remunerative motivations the interviewees brought up different opinions towards remunerative content and how it would motivate them to engage with athletes. Some interviewees brought up how remunerative content could impact them to engage with an athlete on social media however it is depending on the reward.

“If Cristiano Ronaldo would give away like some signed boots I’m in, definitely in.” - Interviewee 4

The interviewees explained that competitions were appealing to an extent, however there was discussion with some interviewees regarding if they would engage with an athlete posting remunerative content on their social media. Interviewee 3, for example did not want to engage with any remunerative content that an athlete posts. Furthermore, Interviewee 1 expressed that there was no point of entering the competition as he does not believe in him winning the competition anyways.

“I do not believe to win in competition, so I see no motivation through this.” - Interviewee 1

Interviewee 4 furthered the discussion surrounding remunerative content from athletes on social media in discussing that he would enter the competition if the reward was appealing for him. However, he mentioned to haven’t found any remunerative content yet that was appealing enough to him. On the other hand, interviewee 5 expressed that discount codes that are provided by athletes were always relevant due to the interest in getting cheaper products related to the sport she is interested in.

“One good thing is that they have discount codes, they try to sell you things, but you are interested in them because it's related to gymnastics.” - Interviewee 5
As the interviews progressed the interviewees were asked about athletes and endorsements as remunerative content on social media. The general consensus from the interviews was that users view remunerative content as both positive and negative. With endorsements being a win for both the athletes and users, as the interviewees explain their views that the user gains as they can be informed of new products or win or get discount codes regarding products that are related to the athlete. As the athlete wins with endorsements as well as an interviewee explained that the gain athlete would win from endorsements as they are paid for it.

“I believe endorsement are a win-win situation.” - Interviewee 9

“Some products I find can be very useful and I have considered buying anyway, so by using their discount codes get me a rebate and give them a bit of the money I pay. It’s good for all parties included.” - Interviewee 5

As the discussion with the interviewee’s continued some expressed that the products that the athlete are promoting through remunerative content needs to be chosen wisely by the athlete, as they expressed that it could negatively affect motivations to engage. Interviewee 8 expressed that for them remunerative content was the actual content that the athlete posted, with the reward not being discount codes or products but the content that the athletes posts on their social media is the reward for them engaging with them.

“I think it is rewarding to follow these persons due to the content they spread.” - Interviewee 8

When further discussing remunerative content Interviewee 8 mentioned that:

“I get a connection with these people by following these people on social media, I believe they are interesting enough to spend my time in and by spending time following them I get closer to them with the content they share” - Interviewee 8
4.4 Social motivations

Continuing the interview onwards to the social motivation, where this topic brought forward the interviewees thoughts on social media networks and how athletes used, or could use, these outlets to motivate users to engage with them. Here questions regarding how the interviewees could relate to the athletes and if a relation to the communities revolving around these athletes could be formed. All interviewees expressed that by engaging with the athletes on social media networks they could come closer to these individuals, creating some kind of relation with them in one way or another. Interviewee 5 expressed that he solemnly related to the sport or activity performed by the athlete rather than their lifestyle as this displayed the common interest between the user and the athlete.

“The ones I’m following I solely relate to them through the sport, it's through the sport that I was participating in that I found to follow them.” - Interviewee 5

This was also the case with Interviewee 2 who had been an athlete and thus felt a connection with these athletes through their sport. But in a majority of the interviews both the athletes lifestyle and the sport they performed was important in how the interviewees related to the athletes. For example, Interviewee 4 means that he can relate to both the sport performed by the athlete as well as the athletes goals and values displayed in their lifestyle.

“I relate to the athletes through common interest, their lifestyle I look up to, I mean everyone wants that rich lifestyle? So of course, you want to see how they have it, as like a potential goal. I mean I’m not going to become a football player but maybe in another way. And sports of course I mean I love football, Ronaldo mainly post football, so I relate to that.” - Interviewee 4

This mixture of values, lifestyle and sports performance often depends on who the athlete, the interviewees engaged with, was. While some felt that one athlete had a more interesting lifestyle with which they could relate, other relationships with athletes were more based upon the sport. When furthering the interview towards the interviewees relation with the communities that revolves around the athletes on these social media networks, many of the interviewees felt positive towards these communities and felt that they could relate to these other users as they shared either one or several common interests, being the athlete, the sport
that the athlete performed, or the lifestyle and values displayed by the athlete. For example, Interviewee 9 felt as a part of something, where all within the community were on the same social level despite their knowledge or experience.

“We are all part of a community really. It's nice to see that so many people can share an interest in something and contribute to it. Mostly it feels like everyone is on the same level despite of their experience.” - Interviewee 9

Furthermore, in some of the interviews, the communities were perceived as great connections which furthered the connection with the athlete by helping and quickly responding to many of the questions or discussions revolving around the athlete that the interviewees had started or engaged in. However, the opposite was also the case with some of the interviewees did not actively engage with a community and others did not engage at all. This was the case with Interviewee 5 who stated:

“I would say that I am a quiet follower, I just like and don't get in conversations, and not very often reading the comments.” - Interviewee 5

In addition, the interviewees were asked whether they felt pressured into engaging with a certain athlete or if they did so independently, on their own terms. In this discussion, some interviewees felt completely independent in their engagement with athletes on social media, whereas Interviewee 9 and interviewee 8 felt influenced by their surroundings. Interviewee 9 stated that she could engage with athletes in order to be up to date with various situations regarding these athletes in order to be able to discuss this with their friends. Interviewee 7 instead stated that the superstar athletes had become so apparent in her surrounding environment that it was harder not to notice these, thus influencing her to engage with them on social networks.

4.5 Communicatory motivations

The interviews continued onto communicatory motivations where the interviewees were questioned regarding communicatory motivations. The interviewees began by answering the question regarding if they talk about an athlete they follow on social media with their peers. The interviewee’s expressed different motivations for whom and why they talk about
athletes with. Interviewee 1 discussed how he shares athletes content with lots of colleagues and friends due to their common interest in the same sport.

“I enjoy talking to my friends about football or tennis. Mainly football because I have a lot of football interested school colleagues and then it is cool to talk about the game yesterday or about the performance of a specific player. It is important that I can build my opinion about it and being able to contribute.” - Interviewee 1

The interviewee’s continued to express how they share athletes social media content with friends, the interview then lead into what would an athlete need to post for it to be worth to talk about and if there are any specific things that an athlete posted that they talked about with their peers. The interviewees expressed different content that an athlete would need to upload for it to be talk worthy for them. Some discussed that it should be something out of the ordinary, as this gives them something interesting to discuss with their friends motivating them to share the content. Interviewee 4 expressed that it should be something out of the ordinary as well as something that they would think a friend would think is interesting.

“...something out of the ordinary and something I would think is appealing and also if I see something that I think of a friend when seeing it then I would talk about it with my friends.” - Interviewee 4

The interviewees expressed that the content that the athlete should share on social media to be considered talk worthy could various. Interviewee 6 discussed that it could be more than just actual products but considered competitions and promotions are being talk worthy. Communication when discussed with the interviewees, the interviewees expressed themselves as wanting to communicate in a way to engage with the athletes but also, communicate with their friends about the athletes they engage with on social media.

“I wanna connect with my friends and talk with them about it.” - Interviewee 3
4.6 Convenience motivations

The interviews continued to the interviewee’s expressing what their thoughts were regarding social media as being convenient to engage with athletes. The interviewees expressed that they generally regarded social media as convenient to engage with athletes, saying that gaining access to athletes pages and finding information regarding the athletes was easy.

“It’s much easier, you can reach out these people so easy. You can just search for them on social media and find out ways of contacting them there.” - Interviewee 6

This was continued with an interviewee expressing that social media is amazingly convenient to engage with people, expressing the same viewpoint as other interviewees that there is a lot of opportunity regarding social media as if you want to find out more information regarding someone or an athlete you can simply search for it and you will find it.

“I think it is amazing, the available to follow and communicate with people on social media. There are so many opportunities for it, if you are interested in something, or someone you can just search for that basically and find it.” - Interviewee 8

One interviewee expressed that social media is a good option in order to obtain more knowledge regarding the athlete in interest. With the interviewee regarding social media as more trustworthy due to that the athlete is the person writing and posting the comment on social media rather than a journalist informing in a newspaper.

“It is a very good option to get more knowledge about the sport and the athletes as they are presenting themselves, they write the content themselves such as uploads or comments. I feel it’s more trustworthy than information from newspapers as in newspapers the authors are often bending the truth and presenting the athletes partly wrong.” - Interviewee 1

Interviewees continued to express their thoughts upon convenience of social media where it was brought up that it is convenient. However, Interviewee 4 expressed that even though it is convenient to engage there is discouragement when it is known that the athlete will most likely not engage back with the user. Interviewee 4 expressing that with athletes it is mostly
one-way communication with the user's writing to the athlete but, the athlete is not responding to all users. As the interviewees expressed their thoughts upon how convenient social media is to engage with other users and athletes, one interviewee expressed that social media is not convenient for engaging with athletes. Interviewee 3 continued expressing that there are other platforms to gain information from athletes, expressing that there are specific sport pages and media outlets which for the interviewee are more convenient to get information.

“It is not that good on social media. I think there are better ways to know about the athletes for example newspapers.” - Interviewee 3
### 4.7 Empirical summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motivational drive</th>
<th>Most interesting response(s)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Informational motivations</strong></td>
<td>“Social media gives me more insight in certain sports which are not broadcasted on TV so much, like some Olympic disciplines. Now, I can see how the athletes prepare themselves by what they share on social media” - Interviewee 6</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“It could lead to misinformation, if they are giving recommendations on training or nutrition that can hurt you or are ineffective” - Interviewee 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Entertainment motivations</strong></td>
<td>“I guess the sports they do, I would be entertained to see what sports they do and a little bit about their lifestyle because usually you just hear about them in the media, it’s nice to see things from their perspective. To get to know them even though you actually don’t know them” - Interviewee 5</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 4.1: Empirical summary*
5 Analysis

This chapter presents the analysis of the collected data. In the first part of this chapter the data is analysed within the six categories of motivations: Informational motivations, Entertainment motivations, Remunerative motivations, Social motivations, Communicatory motivations and Convenience motivations. The second part goes into the patterns found within users motivation to engage with athletes on social media and in so the connections between the categories of motivation. The analysis is based on the empirical data and codes presented in the appendices 2 through 2.6. The data is used to describe existing theory within the context of athletes on social media.

5.1 Motivational categories

5.1.1 Informational motivations

From the empirical data and the coding, we found that users are seeking for information about the performance as well as the lifestyle or personal life displayed by the athlete, leading to the selective code to be interpreted as “information from and relationship with athlete.” (Appendix 3.1)

The motivational drive to seek for this information was found to be due to common interest in the athletes performance of the sport and, or, in their lifestyle, which was seen in the interviewees responses that they either practice the same sport or are following the sport in general. Moreover, the motivational drives to inform about the lifestyle varied from being able to experience the athletes lifestyle through social media, striving to achieve the same lifestyle, as some sort of inspiration. Furthermore, users are engaging on social media to educate themselves and improve their own practice through trying to do the same things or getting tips from athletes. This corresponds with the sub-motivations curiosity, information seeking, knowledge, the social capital bridging, informational content, information and self-education derived from existing theory (Chi, 2011; Muntinga, Moorman & Smith, 2011; Quan-Haase & Young, 2010; Dolan et al., 2015; Whiting & Williams, 2013) as users are seeking for information about other individual, within this study the athletes were the subject of interest for the interviewees. However, none of the respondents said that they are explicitly surveilling athletes on social media which was mentioned to be a motivational drive by Muntinga, Moorman and Smit (2011). Instead they saw it as simply keeping updated, as these athletes had chosen to share the content through social media.
5.1.2 Entertainment motivations

The literature shows that entertainment motivations is the motivational force that drives users to seek out and engage in social network platforms and content to fulfil their need for entertainment (Quan-Haase & Young, 2010; Kim, Sohn & Choi, 2011; Muntinga, Moorman & Smit, 2011; Whiting & Williams, 2013; Dolan et al. 2015) where the sub motivations are; Entertainment, having fun, kill time, relaxation and escapation.

With consideration of the existing literature and the interpretation of the empirical findings, the authors of this paper put forward “athletes are entertainment” (Appendix 3.2) as the selective code for the category of entertainment motivations to engage with athletes on social media. This was interpreted from the interviews in which the interviewees discussed various aspects of what entertainment they seek for from athletes and in so what entertainment is for them as a motivational drive. The athlete was found to be the actual entertainment for users, with all the content that athletes post on social media. Users were motivated because of the opportunity to see things from the athletes perspective. This can be achieved with the athlete posting content on their social media showing “behind the scenes” or “behind the camera” content, which gives insight into how the athlete lives outside of the mainstream media. Users believe that social media content is posted by the athlete personally and develop a personal relationship with the athlete. In the interviews it was discussed how the respondents felt about the relationship with the athletes and the social media community surrounding them, which was expressed as being a form of entertainment.

As this building of a relationship and the content that athletes post are showing the athletes actual life it implied that the athlete in itself is the entertainment for users. This does not contradict the theory but however adds to the literature from the perspective of athletes on social media.

5.1.3 Remunerative motivations

Theory shows that remunerative content is motivating users to engage with social media pages through some kind of reward. Literature puts forward different types of monetary rewards or economic incentives such as prizes or giveaways but also non-monetary incentives like providing a platform where users can contribute or create content (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Muntinga, Moorman & Smith, 2011; Dolan et al., 2015). Both monetary and non-monetary content shared by athletes on social media could be seen as remunerative rewards, according to the interviewees. The selective code “dependent on reward and
athlete” (Appendix 3.3) was chosen as the interpretation of the category of remunerative motivations. It was shown that from the interpretation of the empirical findings, motivations toward remunerative content were highly dependent on both the athletes and the rewards. Competitions were mostly seen as acceptable, although it was also mentioned that the motivation depends on the prizes, which have to be appealing and the simplicity of taking part in the competition. Some respondents saw no point in these competitions at all as they do not really believe that they could win, therefore they are not participating in these types of competitions. Giveaways or endorsements with discount coupons were perceived as positive and often seen as a “win-win situation”, where the purchase of the endorsed product gets cheaper for the user whilst the athlete can earn money from it. Nevertheless, the frequency was also very important to the interviewees, who stated that it could easily get annoying if the athletes shared this type of content too often. However, neither competitions, nor endorsements, were seen as central motivations to engage with athletes as the interviewees pointed out that the possibility to get something for free or for a discounted price is nice, but that they rather would engage with an athlete who is perceived as interesting. Therefore, non-monetary incentives can be seen as more important because the interviewees mentioned to appreciate a platform where users can contribute, exchange and discuss ideas or knowledge.

5.1.4 Social motivations

Through the coding of the empirical data that was gathered, the selective code “connection to and from athletes” (Appendix 3.4) emerged as a core variable. This code encompasses how the interviewees feel and create a relation with athletes that they engage with on social media networks. This is shown through the axial code “connection to athletes through knowing them personally” (Appendix 3.4) which became present as the empirical finding demonstrated that the interviewees indeed came closer to the athletes and created feelings of personal relation with them. As presented by the authors (Quan-Haase & Young, 2010; Chi, 2011; Muntinga, Moorman & Smit, 2011; Whiting & Williams, 2013; Dolan et al., 2015), the social motivations within UGT revolves around the connections and relations between and within the users and communities throughout the social media networks.

Further the axial code “users connect to athletes due to common interest” (Appendix 3.4) showed that much of these feelings of relatedness stemmed from common interests between the athlete and interviewees. These commonalities could be from sports or from their lifestyles or as the axial code “athletes seen as role models” (Appendix 3.4) demonstrates,
through shared values or goals where the interviewee create a relation with the athlete based on what ideas and values these represent. These relationships can be explained by previous theory of Chi (2011) and Dolan et al. (2015) which are mentioning the social capital bonding and relational content.

Furthermore, authors Quan-Haase and Young (2010), Muntinga, Moorman and Smit (2011) and Whiting and Williams (2013) bring forward the need for inclusion when roaming a social network, and although the empirical findings showed this to be somewhat true, a considerable number of interviewees did not actively engage with a social community revolving around the athlete. Rather, this portion of the interviewees did not care about the community at all or had chosen to “stay quiet”. In contrast the interviewees that mentioned to be more active within the engagement of social media that they like being recognised by other members of the community as they try to express their opinion. When it comes to the community they point out the importance of respectful treatment between the members and that they appreciate a platform where everyone can contribute his opinion freely without the judgment of other. As with disrespectful comments, the interviewee felt the need to defend the peers mentioning that it could feel like defending a friend. The users often feel more empowered to influence their peers on social media, which is shown through the relationships that can arise within the community of social media and can be explained as the expression of opinion, the social capital bonding, integration and social interaction described by Chi (2011), Muntinga, Moorman and Smit (2011) and Whiting and Williams (2013).

5.1.5 Communicatory motivations

In the literature communicatory motivations includes expression of opinion, communicatory utility and information sharing (Whiting & Williams, 2013) and empowerment (Muntinga, Moorman & Smit, 2011). Furthermore, social capital is described by Chi (2011) as users sharing information, knowledge and ideas with their peers. In the empirical data it was found that social media is important to people because of its power to enable them to talk and connect with other people or friends. Therefore, they want to be informed about the athlete or get information from athletes about the sport in order to be able to contribute and express their opinion in a discussion. It was also mentioned that users mostly share content that is out of the ordinary, something special or described as “crazy stuff” but it is not only the case, also information about e.g. nutrition or results are shared with peers. It can also be something that reminds them of a friend, that they are more motivated to share. These
findings were interpreted by the authors through the selective code “communication with and about athletes” (Appendix 3.5), through how users want to communicate with athletes but also communicate with their peers about the information shared by athletes on social media.

5.1.6 Convenience motivations

Previous research found that the easy accessibility, the independence of time and the ability of getting in touch with a lot of people at one time to be motivational drives that can influence users to use and engage on social media (Whiting & Williams, 2013).

The authors of this paper have derived the selective code “convenient to access information from athletes” (Appendix 3.6) from the empirical data. Through the interpretation of the empirical data that it was seen that the interviewees emphasised the advantage that the information provided on social media are created from the athletes themselves and evaluate this information to be more honest and trustworthy than from other medias. This factor therefore can be seen as a motivational driver to engage with athletes on social media. However, some respondents mentioned the problem of possible misinformation on social media and the necessity of being aware of it. Furthermore, the simplicity of using social media and to reach a lot of people was put forward by the interviewees. These findings support the existing theory and shows that convenience motivations drive users to engage with athletes on social media.

5.2 Motivation patterns

It was interpreted by the authors that motivational drives are correlated to create typical patterns of motivation to engage with athletes on social media. Throughout the process of the analysis, the authors saw that the different motivational categories tended to influence each other interdependently, merging together. Which emerged in motivational patterns that could impact the interviewees to engage with athletes on social media networks.

5.2.1 Common interests with athletes

Through the process of analysis, it was seen that shared interests between athletes and the interviewees acts as an emerging motivation that often led the interviewees to initiate engagement with athletes on the social networks. This could be seen within the categories of informational and social motivations, as interviewees found connection with the athletes through the shared interest. These shared interests could exist in the sport performed by the athletes.
athlete, but also in the lifestyle and values displayed by these athletes which the interviewees currently, or wants to, share. Through actively performing, or having performed a sport, the interviewees felt a need for further knowledge, both of the sport itself but also in the key figures within the sport, thus correlating with the informational motivational category. However, this was also seen in the interviewees whom did not actively perform a sport but rather followed it as spectators.

In addition, the analysis process also brought forward the category of social motivations, as the interviewees often initiated engagement with an athlete on social media networks with whom they shared a common interest with. In having something in common, the interviewees experienced that it would be more likely for them to engage with athletes on social media networks, as they felt a closer connection with these athletes.

Within the empirical data it was interpreted that the categories are very interrelated as the respondents were seeking for information about the athletes sports performance and lifestyle, not only to get information from the athlete but also to entertain themselves. Interviewees found that to engage with the athletes, informational and entertainment content are interesting enough to make remunerative content seem rather secondary. This is due to how getting to know the athlete and viewing the shared content from the athletes is rewarding enough for users to engage.

5.2.2 Transparency of athletes

When users engage with athletes on social media it was expressed that there is a need for transparency and honesty of the athletes. This was expressed within the different categories of motivational drives, namely; Informational motivations, entertainment motivations and convenience motivations. In the dialogue with the interviewees it was discussed that users experiencing content that is displayed through the athletes own perspective, felt both more personal and transparent. Furthermore, the interviewees discussed that through engaging with athletes on social media they could see “behind the camera”. It is also important for them to see what athletes do off court or when they do not play their sport. In addition, social media becomes an important informational source for minor sports or athletes within sports which are not often broadcasted on TV, such as the Olympic games. Through social media, the users get a chance to follow the athletes even when they are not currently competing and see how they prepare themselves for competitions, coming events or how they live their daily life.
Following, honesty was brought into the discussion from the interviewees regarding the content from athletes on social media. The users believe that the content which is posted by athletes is more honest than other third parties, for example, newspapers or online news outlets. This is due to users understanding or believing that the content posted on the athletes social networks is posted by them personally. This also created a connection between the users and the athletes, as the users read personal content from the athletes. However, with users wanting transparency of athletes, the interviewees of this research pointed out the importance of athletes needing to be careful with what information they spread. Where the interviewees regarded misinformation as needing to be managed properly by the athletes in order to not spread false information which could lead to users wanting to learn from the athletes practice more in-efficiently or harm people with the information being spread.

This way in which users want transparency from athletes, through how they build a relationship with the athlete, and how the users gain an insider look into the athletes lives is an interrelationship between different motivational drives, where transparency is expressed within convenience motivations, entertainment motivations and informational motivations. Whereas the convenience motivations reveal the need for transparency due to how convenient it is to engage with athletes on social media, thus also showing a need for honest information.

5.2.3 Building a relationship pattern

The empirical data showed that through social media, users want to build a relationship primarily with the athletes but also with the community. Through engagement with athletes on social media, relationships are built through the different motivational drives. The users are more inclined to follow athletes who makes it personal, are interactive and share content which is of interest for the users. An interviewee pointed out that the content sometimes even feels very personal, that it feels like the athlete is sharing it because of her, even though the she knows that it is done for the whole community, inclining that she is aware that a parasocial relationship might exist between her and the athlete. Nevertheless, users appreciate to be recognised and valued by the athletes.

For example, within smaller communities, the respondents mentioned the importance of interaction between the athlete and the followers even more, they like to engage with
athletes on a more personal level, as they are asking questions in personal messages or starting a discussion around the sport.

Even though the community is not seen as central for users to follow it still is a motivational factor for some of the interviewees. Some interviewees appreciate to be able to ask their peers for help or to discuss about their common interests. Some interviewees are developing relationships with their peers as it was mentioned that they feel like friends and that they care about them, especially in the context of social media. This being showcased as an interviewee mentioned that they aim to protect others like friends from being bullied on social media. It was also mentioned that within a community it is very appreciated to have an open platform to express opinions and to be empowered to influence peers which requires a community which is not judgmental and is respecting everyone's opinion.
6 Conclusion

Social media has become a powerful tool for the branding of athletes (Anagnostopoulos et. al 2018). With this, there is a need for athletes to fully understand users motivations to engage with them on social media so that athletes can properly brand themselves on social media. In so, the purpose of this study is to describe what motivates users to engage with athletes on social media. With inspiration from grounded theory, selective codes were created regarding users motivational drives to engage with athletes on social media. Through the motivational drives patterns were discovered from the analysis regarding users motivations to engage with athletes. When analysing the data, it was found that the motivational categories: informational motivations, entertainment motivations, remunerative motivations, social motivations, communicatory motivations and convenience motivations and the motivational drivers within these categories are interrelated. Therefore, the authors described three typical motivational patterns which are motivating users to engage with athletes on social media. The interrelationships between the different motivational drives show different motivations of users, one motivation being “common interests with athlete”, second being the “transparency of athletes” and third “building a relationship”. These three patterns together encompass the authors interpretation of what motivates a typical user to engage with an athlete on social media. “Common interests with athlete” being what leads a user to engagement. These common interests being, for example, an interest in the sport an athlete is performing or an interest in the athlete themselves which encourage the user to engage with them. “Transparency of athletes” is what users see and how they evaluate content from athletes, with users developing a need for transparency and honesty in the information regarding the athletes and their sport. “Building a relationship” is what is built from the engagement, with users building a one-way relationship with athletes through how they engage with them on social media.

Overall, it can be said that users are mostly motivated through their interest in the sports performance and, or, the lifestyle of the athletes. Social media is an additional source to other media to gain more honest and first-hand information about the sport in general as well as the specific athlete with whom users build a relationship with. In addition, social media is seen as a convenient and easy way to gather this information and getting it through entertaining and convenient media. In the context of social media, users are inclined to communicate within an open and respectful community and appreciate to get more insight in a sport through asking peers for help. However, not all users are aiming for the
community but rather appreciate the parasocial interaction with the athletes. This study found that the users are building relationships to the athletes, they like seeing them as humans and like to take part in their life. They like when athletes are interactive and try to do something personal for their community making the users feel included and appreciated.
7 Implication, limitations and future research

7.1 Theoretical implications

This study contributes in bringing more rich data to the field of sports marketing science, in particular the branch of digital marketing within sports. In their adaption of the existing theory of Uses and Gratifications, the authors of this study identifies how, and what, motivational drives that influence users to engage with athletes on social media networks, in order to further the clarification of nuances present within the driving force that is motivation. The authors of this work have brought forward empirical data, coded with inspiration taken from grounded theory, suggesting that the motivational categories displayed within the theory of Uses and Gratifications can interrelate with each other. From this, patterns emerged showing the intertwining of motivational drives showcase the typical motivation to engage of a user. In doing so, greater insight of user motivation to engage with athletes on social media network has been brought.

7.2 Managerial implications

From this study athletes can obtain a better understanding of users motivations to engage on social media. As stated by Green (2016) athletes can use social media to effectively develop their individual brand value and in so influence their marketability, popularity and commercial opportunities. In so athletes can understand the patterns found in the study to improve their brand through the transparency of athletes, users want to engage due to common interests and users building a relationship with the athlete.

For an athlete branding themselves on social media they should take into consideration how users want to build a relationship with them. With users showing parasocial interaction with athletes on social media as users are exposed to athletes and human brands through online advertising (Jin, 2018). With the pattern found athletes should take the relationship building with users into consideration, in so answering more users and building more and stronger relationships.

The transparency of the athlete also needs to be taken into consideration for an athlete on social media as users are discouraged by misinformation and want to gain an insight into the athletes personal life. With this, athletes should consider what content is shared on social media, with thought taken into ensuring there is no misinformation and staying honest to
users. The most important is to consider that users want to engage with the athlete due to common interest, in so an athlete should remember that the users want to see content related to their interest, which is their sport and lifestyle.

7.3 Research limitations
As with most of the studies, this work also has its limitations. As this work employed a purposive sampling method, aiming for variation within the group of university students, it cannot be used for generalization. Furthermore, the study has focused solemnly on the user motivations displayed towards the engagement on social media networks, thus not researching the user motivations within other forms of media outlets such as newspapers, websites, television or radio broadcasts. Therefore, this study will not ensure that the same information presented in this work will be applicable through different outlets of media. Although this study set out to describe user motivation to engage with athletes on social media, it does not describe how these motivations were displayed in terms of actions, as these user actions were represented by the word engage. This then means that the study does not explain the specific actions displayed, stemming from user motivation, but rather what motivations there are to engage and how these influences the users.

7.4 Future research
Despite the presented limitations, the contributions of this study opens up for new avenues of future research. Within the quantitative spectra, future studies should utilize both a larger and a broader sample size in order to enable for more generalizability throughout several user audiences of social media in order to explain these motivations importance further. Further, qualitative research which examine several user audiences and their motivations throughout multiple media outlets is advisable. In doing so a comparison can be made to examine if the motivation to engage with athletic content differ based on which outlet these audiences are exposed to. This could help in the understanding of how different media outlets influence differing types of audiences. In addition, work which further describes the user actions that stems from the presented motivation could also lead to a better understanding within the field of sport marketing.
Reference list


(Accessed: 30 April 2018)

(Accessed: 18 April 2018)


### Appendix 1: Uses and Gratifications Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Uses and Gratifications</th>
<th>Informational Motivations</th>
<th>Entertainment Motivations</th>
<th>Remunerative Motivations</th>
<th>Social Motivations</th>
<th>Communicatory Motivations</th>
<th>Convenience Motivations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quan-Haase and Young (2010)</td>
<td>Curiosity</td>
<td>Having fun Kill time Relaxation Escapation</td>
<td></td>
<td>Peer pressure Social connectivity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whiting and Williams (2013)</td>
<td>Information seeking Surveillance/knowledge</td>
<td>Pass time Entertainment/Enjoyment Relaxation</td>
<td></td>
<td>Social Interaction Expression of opinion</td>
<td>Expression of opinion Communicatory utility Information sharing</td>
<td>Convenience utility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dolan et al. (2015)</td>
<td>Informational Content</td>
<td>Entertaining Content</td>
<td>Remunerative Content</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chi (2011)</th>
<th>Bridging</th>
<th>Bonding Maintaining</th>
<th>Bridging</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh and Gremler (2004)</td>
<td>Economic incentives</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 2: Interview guide

Personal Background:
Age:
Gender:
Nationality:
Education:
Email:

Sport interests?
What is your connection to sports?
What sport are you interested in?
Active:
Passive:
If Active Yes: Are you interested in athletes from your active sport or others?
Why are you interested in sports?
Why are you interested in these particular athletes?

So you’re following ________ on Twitter and Instagram, tell me a little bit about this and why you started to follow him / her

1. What’s your motivation to engage with athletes on social media?

Informational motivations
2.1 When engaging with athletes on social media, are you seeking for information and what information are you aiming for? (Curiosity, Information seeking, Surveillance/ Knowledge, Informational content, Information)
2.2 Describe a specific athlete on which you want to be informed.
2.3 Why are you searching for this information?
2.4 What do you feel about athletes being informational sources?
Entertainment motivations:
3.1 Are you seeking for entertainment when engaging with athletes? (Entertainment, Having fun, Kill time, Relaxation, Escapation)
3.2 Please explain what kind of content you find entertaining that the athletes you engage with can provide.
3.3 Why were you seeking for entertainment?

Remunerative motivations:
4.1 How would you define reward when following an athlete? (Prizes, competition, enablement to contribute or create content)

4.2 Can you please describe the last time you have entered a competition when browsing an athletes social media profile.
  - Why did you enter the competition?

4.3 Athletes often endorse products and some might also have discount codes or free samples. What do you think about this?
  - Would you if you have not yet engage with these athletes?
  - In which circumstances are you attainable to remunerative content?

Social motivations:
5.1 How do you relate to the athletes you engage with? (Relatedness, Autonomy, Peer pressure, Social connectivity, Relational content, Bonding, Maintaining, Personal identity, Integration and social interaction, Seeking friends, Social support)
  - Is it to their sport, lifestyle or to their values etc.?

5.2 How do you relate to other users who are engaging with the same athletes?
  - Please explain why you think that is

5.3 How independent do you engage with athletes? (completely independent, peer pressure)
Communicatory motivations:

6.1 Do you talk about an athlete that you follow on social media with your friends? (Expression of opinion, Communicatory utility, Information sharing, Empowerment)
- Are there any specific things that the athlete uploaded that you talked to your friends about?

6.2 What would a athlete need to post on social media for you to consider it worthy to talk about with your friends?
- Why?

Convenient Motivations

7.1 How convenient do you feel social media is to engage with athletes? (Convenient utility)
Explain.
### Appendix 3: Grounded Theory (Coding)

### Appendix 3.1: Coding informational motivations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Open Codes</th>
<th>Axial Codes</th>
<th>Selective code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Information: Performance; good performance; Performance; performance; performance; share accomplishment; skill; results; performance; develop; other sources for performance; competitions sports; ineffective</td>
<td>Information about the performance of athletes is being sought from athletes on social media</td>
<td>Information from and relationship with athlete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common interest; Common interest; Personal interest; sport; inspiration</td>
<td>Information from athletes on social media is being sought due to common interests</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>glimpse into their lives; follow their life; get to know them; lifestyle; lifestyle; personal life; lifestyle; lifestyle; lifestyle; keep updated on life; personality; private life; lifestyle; follow life; behind the performance; looking for personality; other activities; live in moments</td>
<td>Athlete lifestyle is information that is being sought after from athletes on social media</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transparency; transparency; truth; Honesty; good if honest; transparency</td>
<td>There is a need for transparency of athletes on social media</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>personal connection; develop relationship; one-way relationship; following; connect with persons; inclusion; relationship</td>
<td>Users develop a relationship with athletes on social media</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>easy to update; learning; knowledge; first hand info; improve; nutrition; personal</td>
<td>Users want gain knowledge from athletes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>both good and bad; depending on info; bad if misinformation; spread of misinformation not interesting; depends on situation of info</td>
<td>Concern for gathering information of athlete’s</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix 3.2: Coding entertainment motivations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Open Codes</th>
<th>Axial Codes</th>
<th>Selective code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Practice; Training; Video practice; Performance; Skills; Improvement; Comment on progress; Sport; Competitions; Competitions; Competitive; Not training</td>
<td>What users want athletes to share</td>
<td>Athletes are entertainment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information seeking; Events; Dependent on athlete; media</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expectations; Team spirit; Support; Support</td>
<td>Users want to support the team and get spirit.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supporting; Cheering</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fan interaction; Relation; Community; Sociality; Inclusion; Relation to Ronaldo; Develop relation; Show engagement; Interaction matters; Questions; Communicate</td>
<td>Bonding with the athletes and community</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out of ordinary; Extraordinary; Different from other; Crazy stuff</td>
<td>The need for excitement on social media</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other than sport; Personal life; Lifestyle; Lifestyle; Contrast to normal people; Lifestyle; Lifestyle; Eat; Do; Personal; Not as well-known athletes</td>
<td>The life of athletes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athlete perspective; New insight; Honest content; Athlete perspective; Transparency; Behind the camera; Reality show; Behind the scenes; Athletes are humans</td>
<td>The athlete perspective</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pass time; Entertainment for myself; Habit; Good mood; Liking pictures</td>
<td>Why users use social media</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 3.3: Coding remunerative motivations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Open Codes</th>
<th>Axial Codes</th>
<th>Selective code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prize; Make money; Accepting; Acceptable; Value of reward; Appeal of reward; Worth a try; Compete with athlete; Rewarding; Used to develop; Improving; Comparing; Present; Interesting lifestyle; Getting closer; Share their life</td>
<td>Users thoughts upon remunerative content</td>
<td>Dependent on reward and athlete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No point of entering competition; Not interested; Won’t bother; No prizes; Not too much</td>
<td>Users do not want to enter competitions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rebate; Good for all; Helpful; Knowledge; Endorsements are good; Win-win; Useful; Easy; Worth a try;</td>
<td>Positive thoughts of remunerative content</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choice; Image; Development of ads; Crammed; Frequency; Sponsorship</td>
<td>There are a lot of social media pages with remunerative content</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depends on athlete; more likes; not influential; Younger athlete</td>
<td>Remunerative content depends on athlete</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contribute; Discounts; Opportunity to save; Free tickets; Promote; Need for product; Value of product; Interest; Equipment; Deals; Dependent on product; Football shoes; Interest depends on reward; Arouse interest; What product</td>
<td>Wanting to engage with remunerative content depends on reward.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Appendix 3.4: Coding social motivations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Open Codes</th>
<th>Axial Codes</th>
<th>Selective code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Used to play; together; Know them personally; Ex- teammates</td>
<td>Connection to athletes through knowing them personally</td>
<td>Connection to and from athletes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common interest; Common interest; Own activities; Common; interest; Interest</td>
<td>Users connect to athletes due to common interest</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connect; Personal connection; Making it personal; Relate to athlete; Keep in touch; Build a connection; Easier and honest; Friends; Friendship</td>
<td>Athletes seen as role models</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community matters; Community influence; Communication important; Help from members; Expression of opinion</td>
<td>Connection to social media community</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lifestyle (rich); Lifestyle; Good personality; Athletes values</td>
<td>What users value in the relationship to athletes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal goals; Striving for personal success; Role model; Role model; Role model; Ambassador for the sport; Sport performance; Performance</td>
<td>Inspiration from athletes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interaction; Communicate; Interaction; Easy to reach out</td>
<td>Communication within the community</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quiet follower; Not part of community; Judging; Irrelevant</td>
<td>Not being part of the community</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information; Information; Athlete to athlete; All kind a things</td>
<td>What users gain from relationships with athletes and the community</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent; No peer pressure; Own will; Own decision; Independent</td>
<td>Users independently engage with athletes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Close people; Dependent; Influence</td>
<td>External influences to engage with athletes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix 3.5: Coding communicatory motivations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Open Codes</th>
<th>Axial Codes</th>
<th>Selective code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Near ones; Friends; Family; Contact; Enjoy talking with friends; Colleagues with same interests</td>
<td>Whom users are sharing athletes content with</td>
<td>Communication with and about athletes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Updated; Share interest; In real life community; Informate; Inclusion; Values; Fan community; Club; Easy to find others; Fantastic; Availability to follow; Availability to communicate; Interaction with fans; Interaction teams/clubs</td>
<td>Positive features of social media</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Life; Results; Interesting to me; Include others; Trips; Upcoming Games; News; Results; Recipes; Clothes; Games performance; Performance; Common interests; Appealing; Out of ordinary; Relational with friends; Something really cool; Information insight into Sport; Nutrition; Recipes; Clothes; Exciting; Mix; Upcoming events; Performance; Not repetitive; Competitors; Relevant; Useful; Want knowledge; Updated; Statements; Purchases</td>
<td>What users want to share with others</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social; Reminding of friends; Impress share reaction with others; Showing them; Common interest; Interesting to friends; Common interest; Talk with friends; Social; Connect to friends; Sharing interest; Inclusion; Talk about athletes Rivalry; Competing; Colleagues with same interests</td>
<td>Why users want to share with others</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix 3.6: Coding convenience motivations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Open Codes</th>
<th>Axial Codes</th>
<th>Selective code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trustworthiness; Good information; Real information; Honesty; Like newspapers better; Transparency compared to other sources; Different opinions; Different information; Personal information; Bending the truth</td>
<td>Positive evaluation of information from athletes on social media</td>
<td>Convenient to access information from athletes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not good information; Misinformation</td>
<td>Negative evaluation of information from athletes on social media</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easy to use; More convenient than newspaper; Convenient to engage; Communities; Connections; Convenient; Contact; Communication Surveillance; Communication; Amazing</td>
<td>The convenience of social media to engage with athletes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One-way communication; Large athletes do not have time; Should interact with community</td>
<td>Athletes do not have time to engage with users</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>