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Key Success Factors to improve sport news agency for all Canadian Olympic athletes

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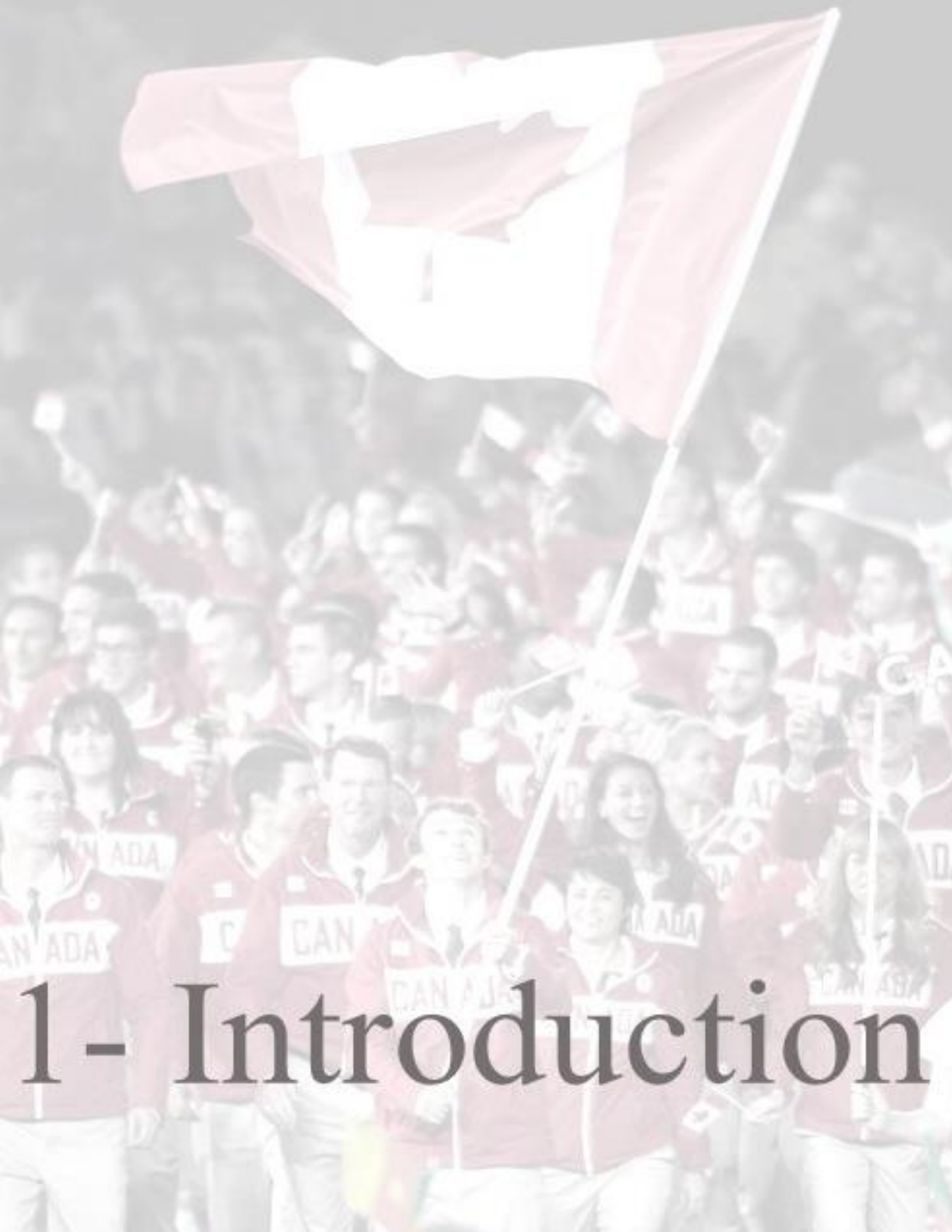
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Sylvain Leclerc

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1- Introduction

“The Olympic Agenda 2020 addresses the relevance of Olympic Sports and its values by the proposal for the creation of an Olympic Channel. We must give our athletes and sports the world-wide media exposure they deserve also between Olympic Games. We must give our many actions in the humanitarian, cultural and social field the attention they deserve. We must give the youth better access to athletes, sports, Olympic History, Olympic Culture and Olympic Values.”

In his speech on the occasion of the Opening Ceremony of the IOC session in Monaco on December 7th 2014 (127th IOC Session) to discuss the Agenda 2020, IOC President Thomas Bach addressed an important issue, the lack of athletes media exposure between the Games.

And Canada is no exception. Between Olympic Games, Olympic athletes don't get enough media exposure because Canadian-based media don't have enough complete reports from competitions they don't cover in situ (World Cups, Continental Championships). We rely on media to get the news. We need instead to get the news to media. This is what the news agency Sportcom has done for more than 15 years with Quebec-based athletes, who receive more coverage than athletes from other provinces. The objective is to analyze Sportcom model and see how we create a structure for all Canadian Olympians to benefit from the same service level.

The figures that are coming out of the Olympic Games are impressive. Here are some from Sochi Winter Olympic Games : @ 250 broadcasters broadcasting 114 000 hours across all media platforms @ 1.4 billion digital videos viewed globally @ Broadcast audience of 2.1 billion (*Canadian Olympic Committee (COC), 2014*)

The Sochi 2014 Olympic Winter Games showed that athletes get their fair share of media coverage during Games. In addition, the 2013-14 COC Brand and Campaign Tracking reveals that the Canadian Olympic Team (COT) brand is stronger than ever, with 80% of population saying that they watched coverage of Canadian athletes on TV, 50% read about COT in newspaper/magazine, 47% visited Website for COT info / live coverage (*COC 2014*). Besides, COT has the highest recognition amongst all National Olympic Committees (NOC): 94% vs 87% for the second highest NOC. Of that group, 81% can correctly identify the mark – 11pts higher than the next best NOC, +33pts vs. the global average, and up vs. 31% post London. (*International Olympic Committee, 2014*). Canadian fans were the most socially engaged in the world, per capita, with a reach of more than 6% in Sochi (*COC 2015*).

These figures show there is a clear appetite for Olympians in Canada, that there is a momentum we can use to provide more content to the fans for them to care even more about the athletes and become even more engaged. The goal of the research project is not to find ways to get more media coverage for the Canadian athletes at Games, but between the Games. This project is important to me because I truly think Olympic athletes deserve a better level of media coverage all year round and not just two weeks every four years. It is important for my organization in order to level up the services offered to all national federations and ensure that not just rich NFs have the capacity to promote their athletes' results. And it is important for MEMOS because such a project could also benefit athletes from other countries because this model could be exported outside Canada.



2- Literature review

What does the literature say about on my research question “How to create, finance and implement a national news agency to better promote all Canadian Olympians modeled on Sportcom concept?” Using variety and combinations of key words/expressions such as “sport communications”, “athletes’ communications”, “athletes’ promotion”, “news agency”, “national sports organizations”, “amateur/Olympic athletes”, results were unfortunately meagre. The only interesting references that came up in regards with athletes’ communications and/or promotion were about professional athletes. Publications such as *Sport Business Journal* and *Journal of Sport Communications*, among others, have great articles on professional athletes -- sometimes answering questions so refined to wonder if they don’t dedicate too much time and effort on pro athletes, like a list created by *Forbes Magazine* that assessed the relative values of the ten highest-paid soccer players based on action statistics and salary; determining that Recoba offered the worst value while Zidane offered the best. (Westerbeek, Smith, 2003, p14) --, but barely nothing on amateur/Olympic athletes. And when articles did refer to Olympic athletes, it was within the Olympic Games environment.

The Quebec-based news agency Sportcom seems to be the only one of its kind in the world. A benchmark operation made with developed sport business systems, such Germany, Australia, Norway, France, and the United States, the only nation to possess a hyper developed sport business system (Westerbeek, Smith, 2003, p49) reveals that these countries don’t have a dedicated news agency that covers the feats of their various national teams’ athletes. In all these countries, the responsibility to disseminate events reports to media fall under the NSOs. But given the fact that not all NSOs have dedicated communications staff, not all the sports get coverage, as it is the case in the rest of Canada. Which explains probably why literature on this topic is inexistent. Even the communications office of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) indicated that they don’t have any documentation addressing this issue. This research intends to fill the gaps in the existing literature and to provide some solution avenues on how to improve the media coverage of Canadian athletes between the Olympic Games.

2.1 - Environment assessment

At this stage of the research, it is important to explain some details about the sporting environment in which we live in Canada to understand some key factors that have an impact on the research.

First, a quick overview of Sportcom *raison d’être*. Sportcom “a pour principal objectif d’accroître la visibilité du sport olympique et paralympique, en offrant un service d’information centré sur les athlètes de haut niveau. Sportcom est un organisme sans but lucratif. Sportcom coordonne, développe et finance des initiatives pour assurer un service d’information sur les athlètes et leurs résultats auprès des médias québécois” (<http://www.sportcom.qc.ca>). Initially created in 1997 by Daniel Aucoin, l’Agence Diapo (its original name) operated independently for four years before it moved to “phase two” (*personal communication with Daniel Aucoin*). The initial name was changed to Sportcom in October 2001, when Diapo was bought by le Ministère de l’Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport du Québec, l’Institut national du sport du Québec, la Fondation de l’athlète d’excellence du Québec, Sports-Québec and le Conseil du sport de haut niveau de Québec, institutions still funding Sportcom today (<http://www.sportcom.qc.ca>).

Sportcom is now going through a strategic planning phase to adapt its model to the media reality of 2014 and beyond in order to keep growing in the industry. The results of a survey Sportcom sent to its constituencies during the summer 2014 (66 people answered the questionnaire, of which 30% are media partners, the highest stream of respondent), leading the way to the strategic planning phase, are interesting. To the question “What extra services should Sportcom deliver to improve its offer of service?”, answers go from “rethink the mandate”, to “produce image and video (interviews with athletes)” and “develop social media strategy”. To the question “What are the challenges Sportcom is facing and will face?”, the two most popular answers are “using modern and avant-gardist communications technologies” (62%) and “insure growth and financial stability” (47%). When asked which organizations should be good models for Sportcom to study, the Canadian Olympic Committee was identified as an organization “that has ambition and resources and could assist with its expertise to help create a similar system across Canada”. Finally, to the question “Sportcom in 2018?”, the answer topping the page is clear: a “Canadian Sportcom”.

An interesting piece of literature to consider here is the *Canadian Olympic Committee, National Sport Federations, Best in class Enhancement Initiative, NSF Leadership Summit (2013)*. Conducted by the firm Deloitte, the COC strategic planning private partner, the report aimed at the followings: “NSF leaders were guided through development of a roadmap to address high-priority areas of improvement. The objectives of the project were to provide a system-wide report that identifies improvement opportunities applicable across multiple sport organizations.” And on the process itself: “future state targeting and identification of improvement priorities were seen as useful input to strategic and operational planning.”

Because most parts of the reports were deemed as confidential, I did not have access to the whole report. Here, I can only report on the public findings of the research. In total, 31 areas were assessed in six categories (governance and risk, strategy and planning, leadership and culture, people, revenue generation and engagement, support services). Out of these 31 areas, “68% of the NSFs selected marketing and partnership and sponsorship as a top ten priority” and “marketing, partnership and sponsorships, and fundraising were among the three most frequently selected areas”. Another key highlight of the report: “the five areas where NSFs had the lowest current state assessment include: marketing, fundraising, business development, training and development and risk management”.

These findings are really important for my research because it shows that NSOs want to do better in marketing, sponsoring and fundraising, three areas that are tightly connected with revenue generation. Areas of great importance for me since this is exactly what I want to achieve with my project; have the athletes in the media as much as possible year-round in order to raise their profile in order to allow their federation to market them better and generate more revenues.

2.2 - Key success factors

Given the timeline ahead of me for the research project, I will essentially focus on identifying the key success factors (the term varies according to the literature sources, some also refer to them as critical success factors); I will then use both acronyms according to the literature source cited.

“Critical success factors have been used significantly to present or identify a few key factors that organizations should focus on to be successful. As a definition, critical success factors refer to “the limited number of areas in which satisfactory results will ensure successful competitive performance for the individual, department, or organization” (www.rapidbi.com). In the literature, many KSF definitions exist. Some are pretty long and theoretical; I like this one because it goes straight to the point.

In terms of numbers of key success factors to identify in order to be successful, literature suggests to restrict oneself to a limited number of KSF, as mentioned in Morrison’s definition.

“Key success factors are small in number. By definition, only a small number of factors can explain “a major part” of the variance in perceived value and/or relative cost. This implies that there may be markets where there are no KSF, but only many small contributors to success” (*Grunert, Ellegaard, 1992, p21*).

“It's important to limit your list of KSF to two, or at most three. In creating a list of “activities at which we've got to be especially good,” management teams frequently include six or eight activities. Typically, they'll list, “understanding the customer,” “producing a low-cost product,” “managing expenses,” “hiring good people,” and “developing innovative marketing programs.” The lists are certainly complete. Too complete! They're so all-inclusive and they certainly don't imply focus. But focus is exactly what's required for success. Focus on a few activities, on those two or three (no more) key success factors. In any business, there are two or three activities which are the primary determinants of success. If your company is especially good at those activities and just mediocre at everything else, your company will be successful” (www.birnbaumassociates.com).

On *rapidbi.com*, Morrison warns us not to confuse key success factors and key performance indicators. “A critical success factor is not a key Performance Indicator (KPI). Critical success factors are elements that are vital for a strategy to be successful. KPI’s are measures that quantify objectives and enable the measurement of strategic performance. For example: KPI = number of new customers/ response time & CSF = installation of a call center for providing quotations”

Morrison also argues that “the key to using CSFs effectively is to ensure that your definition of a factor of your organizations activity which is central to its future will always apply. Therefore success in determining the CSFs for your organization is to determine what is central to its future and achievement of that future.”

According to this source, there are four basic types of CSF’s. They are:

- Industry CSF’s resulting from specific industry characteristics;
- Strategy CSF’s resulting from the chosen competitive strategy of the business;

- Environmental CSF's resulting from economic or technological changes;
- Temporal CSF's resulting from internal organizational needs and changes."

Morrison also guides us to follow a certain number of principles in order to write good CSF. In an attempt to write good a CSF, a number of principles could help to guide writers. These principles include:

- Ensure a good understanding of the environment, the industry and the company
- Develop CSF's which result in observable differences
- Develop CSF's that have a large impact on an organization's performance

Finally, Morrison proposes different templates to use for factor analysis. I like his template #3 because it is highly similar, in the language used, to Prof. Brian Minikin's model in the strategic planning module in Lausanne.

What do you want to be? Vision/Mission/Strategic Goals/CSF
<i>Vision / Mission / Profile</i>
What do we want to become / what is our purpose:
Mission: Vision:
<i>Strategic Goals</i>
What do we have to do to get there:
Strategic Goal #1:
<i>Outcomes / Critical Success Factors</i>
How we will get there:
1.1

For my project, following authors' advice, I think that there are three key success factors that will help Sportcom Canada to thrive in the market. Sportcom Canada will thrive if (1) it generates enough revenue to sustain itself financially, (2) its distribution system is in line with current media reality, (3) it engages with the right Canadian sport system stakeholders.

Financial-wise, the goal is to explore as many avenues as possible in order to generate revenue. I don't want to rely solely on the public sector to contribute. In the last few years, the COC has generated millions of dollars from private sponsors, to a point where only 2% of its revenue is public money (*COC, 2014*). The recipe works well and shows the private sector is ready to contribute to different initiatives to help Olympians. With a proactive strategy, I am confident to be able to involve private sponsors in the project.

Distribution-wise, the goal is to identify the best channels that will satisfy the needs/wills of the traditional media, the digital and new media and the fans.

Stakeholder-wise, my goal is to identify the best community partners (NSOs, Canadian Sport Institutes, Sport Canada, etc.) to engage in the project to make sure we all work as a team with the objective to give the athletes the best possible public exposure from coast to coast.

The following part of the literature review will focus on ways to achieve these KSFs.

2.3 - The Internet revolution: the distribution factor

“Internet access has become a routine part of our existence, and wireless technology and mobile device technology now allow virtually constant Internet access anytime, anywhere (...) Websites have become organizational assets, and care must be taken to construct them well and utilize them to their fullest potential” (*Stodt, Wittmore, Branvold, 2012, p74*).

“The search for competitive advantage via the Internet has changed radically. The Internet is the most complete and efficient method of seeking, receiving and imparting information ever developed. It is in fact difficult to imagine a more complete method of information transfer” (*Westerbeek, Smith, 2003, p154*).

As of June 30, 2014, there were 2 802 478 934 Internet users on this planet (<http://www.internetworldstats.com>). In North America, it is 310 million users on a total population of 353 million, for a penetration rate of 87.7% (world average being 42%). In Canada, the penetration rate is even higher at 94.7% (33.000 million users on a population of 34.834 million). In Canada, being on the Internet is crucial for any institution, with 9 persons out of 10 using this platform.

If this is true for any institution in general, it is even more in the world of media: “It is no secret that mainstream news-media viewership and readership have steadily declined. Recent polls show that American newspaper have lost slightly more than 40% of their market value, creating “a palpable sense of doom” among newspapers (*Alterman, 2008, p4*), as cited by Sheffer and Schultz (2010).

According to Tom Rosenstiel, the director for the Project in Excellence in Journalism, “I don't know whether it's five years or 10 years or 15 years, but at some point, the old media will be fully online” (*Ibbitson, 2008*), as cited by Sheffer and Schultz.

And what's true for media is also true for sport, which rely greatly on the Internet. As stated by Migala (2000), cited by Stoldt, Dittmore, Brandvold: "In the Internet world, content is king. In the sport Internet world, content is capital."

For Phua (2010), as cited by Pegoraro (2010), "the Web, through its ability to be a major socializing agent and communication channel for sports fans, will continue to play a vital role, eventually superseding traditional media such as broadcast and print."

Besides, "there is ample evidence that sports boasts some of the most popular and well-trafficked websites. This relationship leads us to an interesting observation. The basic demographic profile of sport fans and web users is remarkably similar. The sporting industry appears to have an excellent platform from which to launch an aggressive assault on Internet activities" (Westerbeek, Smith, 2003, p156).

	Internet User	Sport Fan
Sex – Male	70 per cent	64 per cent
Sex – Female	30 per cent	36 per cent
Average Age	32.7	34
Median Income	US\$ 50 000-60 000	US\$ 50 000+

Adapted from L. Delpy (1998), Sport Management and Marketing via the World Wide Web, Sport Marketing Quarterly, Vol. 7, No 1, p 7-21

For all authors studied in the literature, the key word to remember is adaptation to this new environment.

"Although the World Wide Web had gotten its start in the early 1990s, very few people would have predicted the seismic shifts that Web access and Web applications would have on the sport communication landscape. It is remarkable to think that common present-day communication methods and concepts such as blogging, Internet-enabled phones, online digital video, and social networking weren't part of the lexicon a decade ago. Well, times have changed, and the old-guard traditions of newspapers, single platform stories (...) are slowly being squeezed out of existence" (Clavio, 2010, p393)

The conclusion is identical for Stoldt, Dittmore, Brandvold: "What is commonplace today may be outdated within a short time. This rapid obsolescence has implications for public relations professionals, who must be constantly alert to the technological advances and innovations that alter some of the tools and subsequently the practices of the public relations practitioner. No one could have foreseen these developments six years ago, and predicting the next six years is equally difficult. What is not likely to change is the ability of fans to receive information almost instantly on their phones or mobile devices (...) fans expect information to be available as it happens. The distribution method of the news release is important. In today's age of instantaneous media coverage, knowing how to distribute the information quickly and in a manner preferred by the media is critical."

And social media now seems to be this "manner preferred" you can't away from.

2.3.1 _Social media frenzy

Here too, the literature abounds on the critical importance to include social media, this revolution within the revolution, in any sport organization strategic planning. First, two quick definitions.

“Social media can be defined as the tools, platforms, and applications that enable consumers to connect, communicate and collaborate with others. Social media are distinguished from the other forms of communication because they support user participation on a massive, collective scale: the contribution are also distributed among the participants to view, share, and improve” (*Bradley, 2010*), as cited by Williams and Chinn.

“Social media are part of what is referred to as Web 2.0. Web 1.0, its predecessor, was characterized by mostly a one-way communication experience. In Web 1.0, a person or company would build a Web site, populate it with content, and then wait for people to visit the site and read the content” (*Weinburg, 2009*), as cited by Pegoraro.

Leading the way in sport information dissemination: Twitter.

Once considered only a tool to post messages to relatives and friends, Twitter had become another social-networking tool used by news-media outlets (*Johnson 2009, Lavirusik 2009, McIntyre 2009, Schultz & Sheffer 2010*), as cited by Sheffer and Schultz. For Johnson, Twitter is nothing less than “the most-adopted social-media”, a microblogging platform “the entire sports world is obsessed with.”

“WFTV news director Bob Jordan noted that Twitter “is now the primary way a lot of people communicate, share and obtain information. Not to be in that space would be just the dumbest thing anyone could do.” People are disseminating information, they’re Facebooking, they’re twittering, says Bob Longo, television news director at WESH in Orlando, FL. “We’re best served if we’re part of that” (*Petner, 2009*), again cited by Sheffer and Schultz.

“Twitter appears to be on the cutting edge of a revolution in creating and distributing news content (...) increasingly, stories will come less from traditional media and more from the passed links of people on Twitter. What the traditional media lose in an agenda-setting sense they will gain in the ability to converse directly and immediately with news consumers” (*Sheffer, Schultz, 2010, p482*).

“The real-time, interactive nature of Twitter makes it ideal to study the relationship between sports journalists, athletes and fans. All the advantages that Twitter brings to media and journalism are even more pronounced for sports, which already has a large, built-in audience hungry for the opportunity to talk directly with sports journalists, athletes, and coaches. Thus, Twitter has the potential to change the athlete/fans interaction forever” (Gregory, 2009), as cited by Sheffer and Schultz.

“In a media environment in which many print outlets are losing money and going out of business, Twitter can be viewed as an inexpensive way of breaking news, reaching new audiences, and promoting other media content. Small and print outlets may see Twitter as a way of making themselves more economically viable, especially considering that Twitter users are much more likely to visit Internet news sites than those who do not use Twitter” (Diaz, 2009), again cited by Sheffer and Schultz.

“Once journalists push a story out to the public via Twitter, it can disseminate far beyond the traditional reach of the media outlet. “The power of Twitter is when people start spreading your stories for you”, said Jonathan Kealing, online editor of the Lawrence, KS, Journal-World” (Sheffer, Schultz, 2010, p474).

The challenge for the sport industry is to embrace these new tools, strategically manage their social-media presence, and gain greater understanding of the potential value of Web 2.0 tools in meeting relationship-marketing goals, as stated by Williams, Chinn (2010, p427).

As showed before, demography is an important element to consider from a strategic point of view. According to Nielsen Media, the primary users of Twitter are 35-49 years old, which coincides with the demographics of heavy sports consumers (Gantz, Wenner, 1991, Perse 1992), cited by Sheffer and Schultz.

A few numbers to showcase the magnitude of Twitter. During the 3rd semester of 2014, 284 million people were active Twitter users (compared to 49 million at the same period in 2010, 101 in 2011, 167 in 2012 and 232 in 2013. Each day, more than 500 million Tweets are created; 80% by phone (www.statista.com). As for Facebook, numbers are even more impressive: 1.35 billion users (third semester of 2014, notably 206 million in Canada and USA) vs 550 million at the same period in 2010, 800 in 2011, 1.007 billion in 2012 and 1.189 billion in 2013 (www.statista.com).

2.3.2 _By-pass traditional media and engage the fans

But the power of Internet and social media extend far beyond the simple information distribution. Pedersen, Miloch and Laucella (2007), cited by Stodt, Wittmore, Bravold, conceived a strategic sport communication model in which one of the three components focused on sport mass media. In it, they distinguish among three segments of sport mass media: publishing and print communication, electronic and visual communication and new media. In other words, new media is now its own channel. Now, organizations don't have to rely only on mass media to disseminate their message; they can by-pass traditional media and share their message through the new media channel. Organizations and athletes themselves can now engage directly with the fans. Here, again, literature abounds, indicating that these strategies must be fully exploited to make my project a successful one.

“Internet is a great source of publicity. Although that can involve the mass media, we've seen a shift in the field in recent years as sport organizations move to become their own in-house media sources. In other words, instead of going to the newspaper or relying on the nightly news to spread the word, organizations are using the Internet and social media to do it their own. Internet

is a great source of community. One of the reasons that many of us follow our favorite teams on the Internet or through social media is the sense of connection that we feel when we do so. We feel informed, engaged, and almost as if we are part of the organization when we see behind-the-scenes footage and other items.” (*Stodt, Wittmore, Branvold, p87*).

“I always respond that success in social media comes from the marketer’s capacity and desire to live the brand and deliver value when, where, and how fans want to receive it. Fans are beginning to expect their favorite teams and athletes to communicate via these channels (...) In terms of social media, we can now communicate with consumers rather than to them” (*Balloudi, Hutchinson, 2010, p396*).

“The results suggest that this medium provides a more personalized, unfiltered method of communication not often found in mainstream media. In the past, athletes transmitted their messages via public relations personnel or through media outlets such as television broadcasts or newspaper and magazine articles. Now athletes can reach their fans in a more direct manner. The tweets may enhance fans’ identification with an athlete, leading them to feel as though they know the athlete better than they would by simply watching a quick postgame interview or reading a newspaper story. This access and interaction could prove particularly useful for lesser known athletes who are looking to increase awareness, popularity among fans about themselves, their teams, or their sports” (*Hambrick, Simmons, Greenhalgh, Greenwell, 2010, p463*).

“The potential value and benefits of using social media to meet relationship-marketing goals is significant, and in an environment such as sport it may be particularly relevant in supporting consumers as they become active contributors (...) strategic relationship-marketing practices that strengthen these behaviors may have the potential to provide significant competitive advantages (...) sports organizations recognize that social media can enable powerful platforms to reach a wide group of consumers. Organizational needs revolve around engaging prosumers to contribute to the lifetime value of the relationship. For prosumers, social media meet their needs for easy ways to connect with organizations using technology that they use in other areas of their life and promote empowerment.” (*Williams, Chinn, 2010, p423&427*).

Put simply, as written by Gwinner & Swanson (2003), cited by Hambrick et al, “the more opportunities fans have to connect with the team, the more likely it is they will continue identifying with the organization.”

To conclude, two reflections on the necessity of social media strategic planning in the reality of 2014.

“Question people should ask is, “What’s the risk if I don’t get involved?” If your competition hasn’t already developed a social-media plan, they probably will soon. This means they’re having conversations and building relationships with your fans, which means those tipping-point fans you’re hoping to acquire might start tipping the wrong direction” (*Balloudi, Hutchinson, 2010, p400*).

“Even if Twitter should turn out to be a fad and disappear as quickly as it came, the implications of this study remain unchanged. Another new technology would take its place, a technology that

incorporates the same benefits of real-time dialogue, instant updating, and promotional value. The technology may change but the realities of the new media environment will not, and journalists must adapt” (Sheffer, Schultz, 2010, p482). In other words, resistance is futile...

2.4- The financial structure: the sustainability factor

Over the last few years, the private sector has largely engaged in the sport system in Canada, notably at the top of the pyramid, with RBC, HBC, Air Canada, Bell Canada, Canadian Tire, Petro-Canada, BMW, Molson Coors, adidas, Teck, Oakley, Hilton, to name a few, signing new partnerships or renewing existing ones with the COC. In this era of austerity in many Western countries (Oxfam, 2014), non-profit sport organizations can no longer wait for public money to fall from the sky. They must engage in business development strategies, explore new partnership possibilities in order to sustain. Different models exist in the literature to help us achieve this objective for our project.

In *The pros of amateurs: how amateur sports can put a sponsorship strategy at the top of the podium* (Journal of sponsorship, 2010), Lindsay Rennie offers some interesting reflections to keep in mind.

Rennie argues that, in a country like Canada where government spending on amateur sport is perceived by many to be insufficient compared with countries with similar size and economic strength, corporate support is regarded even more positively.

“For many companies, the level of investment required to sponsor the Olympic Games (if they are fortunate enough to have an Olympics in their country) or their domestic Olympic Committee is just too cost-prohibitive... But there is still a way to associate a brand with the national pride generated by international competition and with athletes who represent the positive attributes of dedication, determination and excellence: through sponsorship of an amateur sport organization” (p339).

“One of the arguments sometimes made against sponsoring an amateur sport is that people only pay attention to Olympic sports during the Olympic Games and then forget about them the rest of the time. (...) It is a sponsor’s best interests to promote the success of their country’s athletes at these competitions and lend further credence to the impact their support is having on the sport. These events may not be in the national consciousness in the same way the Olympics are but there are fans of the sport who care and who can be brought closer to the game” (p340).

Rennie then ties back the sponsorship strategy with media, Internet and social media that was detailed in the previous chapter to maximize the return on investment for the sponsor.

“Depending on the sport, dedicated media options may be few and the literature has shown that television exposure is the greatest single influence on the ability of an NSO to raise revenues from sponsorship. It is key for a reach strategy to be prominently seen in the sport’s best known broadcast, websites and consumer magazines. Niche programs that make a unique connection between the brand and the sport are often discovered through such relationships, and social media expands those possibilities even further” (p342).

For Stodt, Wittmore, Bravold (2012, p6), there is a wide range of opportunities and benefits for sponsors through sport because of the cross-overs between organizations involved: “Sport organizations not only market their own products and services but also may serve as platforms for other organizations, such as corporate sponsors to market their products and services. Similarly, sport organizations not only engage in their own public relation programs but also may serve as vehicles for non-sport organizations to execute their own public relations programs.”

For Westerbeek, Smith (2003, p91): “Communication conglomerates are, unsurprisingly seeking communication instruments: in this case world-wide sporting properties with established bases of fandom through which a whole range of entertainment and other products can be sold on. Enormous profits lie in the application of the communication instrument when developing untapped or even previously unidentified markets.”

In his book *Social entrepreneurship, the art of mission-based venture development* (2000), Peter C. Brinckerhoff, demonstrates that commercialization of a non-profit is essential.

“Does your organization really need business development skills, even though it is a not-for-profit? Absolutely! For far too long, mission-based organizations have suffered under the illusion that they, as charitable organizations, don’t need anything from the business world (...) You are in the business of doing mission, not solely making money, but you are not a charity (...) Being businesslike can and should increase your capacity to do excellent mission (...) You need to discard the old ways of thinking and adapt to the changing environment, the new reality (...) To eschew the idea that business can be good mission is, in the end, harmful to the mission capability of your organization (...) Profit in a non-profit is not only legal, allowable and ethical, it is essential for the organization’s continued success. Without profit, there is no money for innovation, and without innovation, an organization withers on the vine.”

In this book, the author explores interesting business tools and models leading up to commercialization in non-profit sport organizations.

As stated by Deldaele in his MEMOS project (2013, p4), “Brinckerhoff is convinced that social entrepreneurship is one of the essential characteristics of successful not-for-profits. Social entrepreneurs are good stewards. They don’t just rest on their laurels. They try new things, serve people in new ways, are lifelong learners, try to have their organizations be fonts of excellence and have the following characteristics:

- Constantly looking for new ways to serve their constituencies and to add to existing services
- Willing to take reasonable risk on behalf of the people their organization serves
- Always keep mission first, but know that without money, there is no mission output.”

In chapter 3, Brinckerhoff details the core of his book what he describes as “the seven steps of the non-for-profit-business development process”. These 7 steps being: 1. Review your mission, 2. Establish the risk willingness of your organization, 3. Establish the mission outcomes of the business, 4. Idea generation 5. Feasibility studies, 6. Business Plan, 7. Implementation plan with accountability.

Deldeale (2013, p37) also proposes an interesting list of actions to do for organizations aiming towards commercialization, notably:

- Recruit board members with connection to commercial revenue generation, not only with connection to stakeholders (clubs, members)
- Seek for assistance (in business planning, targeted business analysis, market research, strategic planning, access to capital, peer support, mentoring, technical, education, ...), because lack of financial resources and trained personnel are the main roadblocks.
- Work with a business plan, tools and models. It has a significant impact on the success.

Here, I focused on Brickhenohff's work, but the author is not the only one writing about the concept. "Commercialization in general, not sport specific non-profit is here, now, and it's booming" (Hardwick, 2006); "The future of the non-profit sector even depends on non-profits' success in finding new sources of revenue" (Weisbrod, 1997); "Commercialization is also there in voluntary sport organizations" (Enjolras, 2002); "The most successful sport federations diversify their approach to generating revenue beyond commercial sponsorship" (SportingPulse, 2012) as cited by Deldeale (2013).

Literature was oriented on general non-profit sector. As stated at the beginning of the review, most of literature on sport, notably on commercialization, targets professional sports, who fuel themselves through profit. The reality is different for amateur sports and non-profit sport federations/organizations, which explains the rationale to reorient to non-profit sector, a domain in which literature is abundant.

I don't have the pretention to think that I am finding the perfect solution to generate commercial revenue for a non-profit sport organizations. This literature acts more as a way to orientate search for such private money in a few directions, to propose a few exploration avenues. Because, as stated by Deldeale (2013, p37) "always keep the mission (promoting your sport), values and goals of your organization first, but know that without money, there is no mission output."

As for the third and final KSF, there are literature references providing a broad view of the sport system in Canada in order to identify some strategic stakeholders and partners for my project and an understanding of the externalities that affect the reality of this system. Lucie Thibault and Jean Harvey's *Sport Policy in Canada* (University of Ottawa Press, 2013) and *Canadian Sport Policy 2012* (Government of Canada) proved to be key sources in that regards. Using these references, I intend to use the data I will collect through my interviews and questionnaires to recommend the best stakeholders to partner with.

This literature review shows that there is no framework in other countries we can import in Canada to create a nation-wide news agency for Canadian Olympians, and indicated that Canada needs such a structure to lead the world in athletes' media exposure between Olympic Games. The environment assessment also showed that there is some kind of momentum in our sport system to support such initiative and that recent technological spurts makes this project even more feasible. I am more convinced than ever that this is a truly unique project worth working on, hoping it can fill the existing gaps in the literature.



3- Methodology

As for the methodology and method used for this project, I have decided to opt for qualitative and semi-structured interviews. Why qualitative? Because of the lack of theory and literature on the topic. Why semi-structured interviews? Because for this project my method will be based on purposive sampling, and because semi-structured interviews leave the possibility to seek for clarification or more information by follow-up questions.

I have identified 6 different streams of stakeholders to interview for the research. The 6 streams are the following:

- 1- Sportcom representatives – being the source of the concept, Sportcom reps know about operations (the content creation and distribution) on a daily basis, and know best about the management of their organization and day-to-day operations of the news agency.
- 2- Media representatives – this category will be split in two categories. The Quebec-based media: because they are the main distribution target of Sportcom and the ones using the Sportcom content. The rest of Canada media: because they would be the main distribution target and the ones using the content produced by Sportcom Canada.
- 3- National Sport Organizations – through their national team athletes, which they manage, they would be an important beneficiary of this new structure, with the goal of balancing between managing and executive position.
- 4- Managers of Canada sporting system – the people managing athletes centered programs and athletes training centers/institutes who could become important partners of Sportcom Canada
- 5- Other experts – pundits coming from various horizons and gravitating around the sport industry in Canada who have a great knowledge of its reality (sport business, private partnership, digital and social media).
- 6- Athletes representatives – because this service is offered to give a wider voice to the athletes, the voice of athletes should be heard in the research as well, they're the central element to the whole operation.

I consider these 6 streams of stakeholders to be essential to the research because they represent the streams Sportcom already deals with on a daily basis for management, operations, promotion and funding purposes. These 6 streams represent a good overview of the sport system in Canada. With their different perspective and knowledge, these stakeholders will be able to provide me with their different inputs, recommendations and visions I will be looking for to develop good strategies for Sportcom Canada.

Since the topic is really narrow, I don't want to go outside of these pre-determined barriers to gather other data through surveys or questionnaires because I am worried about the quality of the input would not be precise enough.

Here is the list of interviewees in each stream:

A) Sportcom:

- 1- François Messier: Sportcom chairman
- 2- Daniel Aucoin: founder of Agence Diapo, predecessor of Sportcom

B) Media

In Quebec

- 1- Simon Drouin: amateur and Olympic sport reporter *La Presse* newspaper
- 2- Daniel Dumoulin: manager RDS.ca, the most trafficked sport info Website in Québec

In rest of Canada

- 1- Scott Russell: Olympic host and reporter for CBC, Canada's Olympic broadcaster
- 2- Donna Spencer: amateur and Olympic sport reporter for The Canadian Press

C) National Sport Organizations

- 1- Jeff Feeney : communications manager at Diving Canada (summer sport)
- 2- Mark Rubinstein : CEO at Alpine Canada (winter sport)

D) Managers sport system

- 1- Ken Bagnell: president of Canadian Sport Center Atlantic
- 2- Cathy Priestner: CEO of ViaSport BC and co-founder of Own the Podium

E) Other experts

- 1- Kristina Schaefer: Executive director partnerships at the Canadian Olympic Committee
- 2- Todd Denis: Brand director at the Canadian Olympic Committee
- 3- Mark Silver: president of Stadium Digital, specializes in content and technology for sport properties and former head of digital department at Canada's Olympic Broadcast Media Consortium

F) Athletes, from COC athletes commission

- 1- Jeff Christie: chairman of commission (luge), never had access to Sportcom services
- 2- Andréanne Morin: member of commission (rowing), had access to Sportcom services
+ also member of WADA's athlete committee

As for the content of the questionnaire, it will be highly connected with the three key success factors that I have identified in the literature review: the distribution of the content, the financial structure and the identification of the right partners for the project. Though the core of the questionnaire will remain the same, the questions will vary from one stream to another. The objective here is to use the full potential of each stream perspective and expertise in order to get the most complete overview of the industry as possible to create interconnectivity between the identified key success factors.

@ For the Sportcom stream, emphasis will be put on the feasibility of the transformation of their provincial structure into a national one.

@ For the media stream, emphasis will be put on the recent technological changes in their industry over the last decade with the emergence of the Internet and social media, their view of how the content should be delivered to their media given the new channels of news distribution and how to take full advantage of the media multi platforms environment.

@ For the NSO stream, emphasis will be put on how the creation of such a structure could benefit them with the enhanced visibility of their athletes and brand, on the new possibilities of content use on their organization Website and social media pages and on athletes' blogs and social media pages.

@ For the managers' stream, emphasis will be put on the numerous possibilities of partnership between their organization and Sportcom Canada (as Institut national du sport du Québec, member of the Canadian Sport Center/Institute network, is an important financial partner of Sportcom), and on how they could financially invest in such an endeavor.

@ For the experts' stream, emphasis will change according to the interviewee since they all have different background and expertise. For M. Silver, focus will be put on the strategic planning and integration of new technologies. For M. Denis, who manages the digital department at the COC, focus will be put on social media and how to stay ahead of the curve in that regards. Finally, for Ms. Schaefer, who has worked more than 15 years for the U.S. firm IMG as consultant in integrated Olympic sponsorship programs, focus will be put on partnerships and sponsorships solutions.

@ For the athletes' stream emphasis will be put on their athlete's perspective dealing (Morin) or not (Christie) with Sportcom, the opportunities and the missed opportunities, the reality of dealing with media.

Before conducting the interviews with the aforementioned people, I will validate my lists of questions with an expert in sport management post-grad studies. For this action, I have opted for Ms. Julie Mahoney, an Olympian in fencing at the Sydney Olympic Games who is currently doing a PhD in Sport Management at the University of Ottawa and who has been working at the Canadian Olympic Committee since 2005. To maximize the semi-structured interview format and help prepare complete answers, all interviewees will receive in advance the list of questions.

As for the data collection in itself, all of my targeted interviewees have accepted to partake into the project (some have been contacted by email, some I met in person to talk about the project). Due to the fact that Canada is a large country and that targeted interviewees live in Vancouver, Calgary, Toronto, Montréal and Halifax, I used a combination of face-to-face and Skype or telephone interviews to reduce the costs of the operation. Every interview has been recorded and every interviewee was informed that the interview was recorded.

Before starting the data analysis, I assessed the possibility to use the software Nvivo to code verbatims and therefore regroup answers. But after exploring an online tutorial, I decided not to use this tool, as I would had to spend too much time studying its features. Hence, I didn't use any software to analyze the data.

Finally, to cover some legal aspects related to my project, as the implications and potential conflicts that could arise between some digital content created and disseminated to media by Sportcom, I have also questioned COC' Deputy General Counsel, Me Sarah-Eve Pelletier. Since the latter doesn't intervene as a regular interviewee in the main part of the research but rather on a specific topic, hence with a different role, I did not include her in the section where I list my streams of experts. Me Pelletier is the only contributor interacting in this manner in the research. The views expressed by Me Pelletier in this research where made personally and do not represent a legal opinion or the views of the COC or any other organization.



4- Diagnostic analysis

“I was surprised... it seems like it would be a really universal and beneficial service” – Kristina Schaeffer

“I thought it was awesome” – Mark Silver

“I was telling myself the other provinces are missing an opportunity” – Jeff Feeney

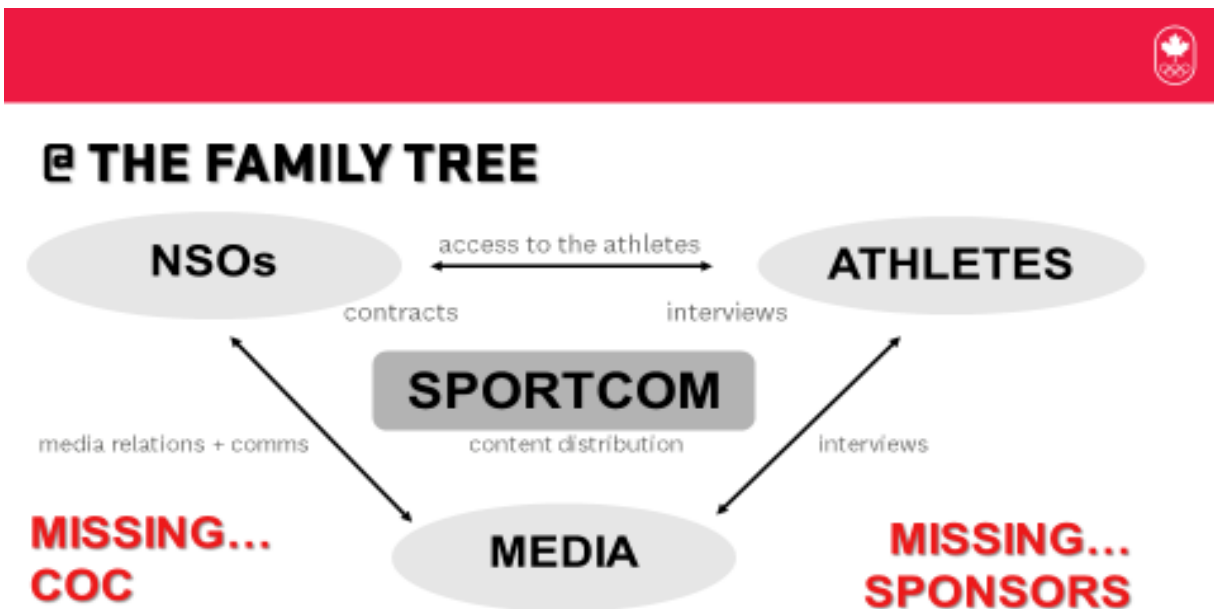
“What a wonderful tool this would be to connect Canadians and media outlets that could get the message across about Canadian elite athletes. It’s a terrific idea” – Scott Russell

“I was not surprised at all... and curious to see how it operated for so long without being national” – Todd Denis

“How fortunate the Quebec athletes are” – Ken Bagnell

4.1 – General assessment

Before getting in detail with my three key success factors, I wanted to question my experts on a few general elements: the level of awareness they had on the brand, why they think this long lasting initiative was only available in one part of the country, the needs Sportcom fill in the media landscape, its benefits for parties involved, and the feasibility of the project.



Before analyzing the results, I thought it was important to illustrate with the previous graphic how the different stakeholders evolving around Sportcom operate between each other and how they relate to Sportcom; what I call the family tree. Sportcom is the central structure in this graphic. Sportcom is the body conducting interviews with the athletes, this content is then distributed to the media. Sportcom also interacts with certain NSOs for the distribution of content to media this is not athlete and result related, for instance when a NSO contracts Sportcom to write a press release on an upcoming major competition, a team announcement, etc. Outside the Sportcom spectrum, it is business as usual between NSOs, athletes and media: the NSO, through their media relations manager or other designated officer, is the body that will give access to the media to certain athletes when a request is made by a reporter, who will then conduct the interview with the athletes. As pointed out by Simon Drouin, from La Presse, in his interview, he will often use the content/news created by Sportcom as source of reference before conducting the interview and writing his features.

4.1.1 _The awareness

First and foremost, I wanted to test the awareness level of Sportcom outside the province of Québec. I asked the question to all the interviewees living outside the province, so 10 people out of my sample of 15 experts: Jeff Christie, Cathy Priestner, Scott Russell, Ken Bagnell, Jeff Feeney, Kristina Schaeffer, Todd Denis, Mark Rubinstein, Mark Silver and Donna Spencer. Out of these 10 people, four knew about the existence of Sportcom (Bagnell, Feeney, Rubinstein, and Silver).

Being the communications manager of Diving Canada, M. Feeney has been dealing with Sportcom on a regular basis for many years since many of the divers on the national team are from Québec. As CEO of Alpine Canada, M. Rubinstein learned about Sportcom when he joined the organization over a year ago. As former head of digital of the Olympic broadcaster for the Vancouver and London Games, M. Silver learned about the existence of Sportcom just prior to London Games when the network thought about contracting Sportcom to provide Games-time athletes' information. As president of CSC Atlantic, M. Bagnell has known Sportcom for over a decade, which essentially leads back to the very beginning of Sportcom, through conversations with different president and CEOs of Institut national du Sport, one of the funding sponsors of Sportcom.

On the other side of the spectrum, despite their long lasting involvement and participation in the Canada sport system, surprisingly, neither M. Russell (20-year broadcaster veteran who covered nine Olympic Games), Ms. Spencer (award-winner veteran sport writer, whose French counterpart, *La Presse canadienne*, publishes Sportcom releases day in and day out), both members of Canada's Sport Hall of Fame, M. Christie (double Olympian who competed 10 years on World Cup circuit), and Ms. Priestner (who had a wide range of experience as co-founder of the renowned program *Own the Podium* and as an executive with Vancouver Olympic Games Organizing Committee) knew about the existence of Sportcom before partaking in the current project, which is a good indicator of the lack of awareness of the program outside the province of Québec.

This situation doesn't seem to surprise Andréanne Morin, who had benefited from the service during her over 10 year international career: "Sportcom always had a self-effacing image. They never had a strong presence on the ground, during national competitions or training camps. I always had too few opportunities to meet their reporters, I could never really put a face on a name, it was almost exclusively done by phone. It was really difficult to "feel". So if it was tough for me to know them, I'm not at all surprised that people in the rest of the country don't know this organization."

For the president of Sportcom, François Messier, the lack of awareness is obviously a concern and he thinks the government of Québec, who funds Sportcom through the ministry of Education, Leisure and Sport (MELS), should have a strategy to promote the organization to its counterparts in the rest of the country: "There should be a credible ambassador who goes out across the country with a pilgrim staff to advocate the importance to promote athletes'

performances and successes. If we can't find a way to have development budget ourselves to showcase our model across the country, maybe it's Québec representatives who attend a national forum or convention on sport and put Sportcom Québec on the agenda as a model to copy. Québec was the first province to invest in such a structure; they should take the credit for that and brag to others saying: "look what we do to profile our athletes and look how it's been successful!" It's a matter of educating and raising awareness to a new public to ensure this model can be duplicated. We need a spark to grow."

4.1.2 _The why?

The answers I got to the question "why do you think Sportcom exists only in Québec and not also in the rest of the country" varied a lot from one stream to another... and interestingly nobody pointed out directly at money as the main factor, though Todd Denis thinks the profitability factor could have played a role: "I always felt that Québec had a bit more community-based thinking: "they should have support, therefore let's do something even if we can't figure out how to make a profit out of it." As English Canada always had a slightly more for profit mentality when comes to sport coverage: "if you're competing and it's a popular sport, you're getting it... if not, deal with it!"

For Jeff Christie, it comes down to the concept of alignment: "Throughout my involvement in sport, I recognize how Québec is really good in empowering sport and is probably the best organized province in terms of alignment of sport system, so that's probably why they have it and the others don't."

"I understand that different provinces may adopt different strategies to support sport in their territory. Québec is really athlete-focused. In Alberta, they focus more on the infrastructures. Maybe another province focuses more on organizing events. It's perfectly appropriate for different provinces to approach the investments in sport in different ways. So it's not like someone is right and someone is wrong", reckons Mark Rubinstein.

"We often talk about the two solitudes, I think this illustrates the point once again. Second of all, in Canada, people are really competent at managing sport and performance but most are really bad at promotion, marketing and media relations. Many times, Anglophones told me they were impressed by the variety of our sport newscasts. But I think they're too conservative to change their media", reflects Daniel Aucoin.

"I work with a lot of federations in Québec: lot work in silo and are really territorial. You might say that you know how to promote their athletes, but sometimes you need help. I'm pretty certain the same applies in the rest of the country. There are major communication challenges even if the PSOs are under the same roof at the Olympic Stadium. I can't really imagine how hard it must be across the country to have everybody together around the same table to have a global discussion on finding the best way", indicates Daniel Dumoulin. "We need to unite everybody at the same table. You need the ultimate coalition champion, a person highly respected across Canada from day 1 to be able to channel the message, to then have the influencer from each province to go down in the provincial organizations to deliver this one clear message. It has been done in Québec, you now need a strong leader in English Canada."

4.1.3 *The needs*

When asked the question “do you think athletes from outside Québec should also benefit from such a service”, the answer was sound and clear for all the interviewees living outside Québec: yes, such a service should be accessible.

Many experts underlined the desperate need for more content creation around Olympic athletes in Canada. For M. Rubinstein, the media coverage of alpine skiers in Canada is simple: “It’s very poor! Whether they’re abroad or in Canada. And I’d say it’s very poor across many amateur sports, but it’s certainly true for Alpine Canada.”

“I think it’s a real void in the sports communications landscape for amateur athletes. The Olympic year, the top athletes will get their spotlight. But there’s so many great stories off the podium that deserved to be told even if they won’t sell newspapers; they could belong on a local community webpage, but they’re no one there to write it. With the cuts at CBC and in the media, the expertise is out there. Expanding Sportcom would be a huge step forward to fill the existing void. If it’s a national service and you hit all national news desks, it could help build the athletes brand across the country. I don’t think it’s a bad idea to be sending your story nationally instead of just locally or with the few journalists you know will cover your story”, points out Jeff Feeney.

“We have a problem in Canada in terms of profiling athletes. There is an utter lack of content. Canadian Press would be happy to include more content, pending on the price they’d have to pay”, adds Mark Silver.

“What immediately comes to mind is the necessity for a “syndication sort-of service”, which would gather material both audio and visual concerning Canadian high performance sports athletes and that disseminate that information back to Canadians who do not have access to that information on a regular basis. This kind of material/service exists to cover professional sport athletes in North America, in Europe. But it doesn’t exist in Canada for amateur athletes and it’s a great service to develop and one that is needed as far as I’m concerned”, thinks M. Russell.

“Media needs information much faster than many NSO kick it out. Doing that would widen the range of exposure offered to the athletes. The reach of it also has to be considered. When you are relying on reporters to go grab it on a Website, it limits the amount of exposure the vast majority of athletes can get. Give the news to the media”, expresses M. Bagnell.

4.1.4 *The benefits*

“The beauty with Sportcom, is that they’re there for all the athletes, not only superstars like Alexandre Despatie and Chantal Petitclerc. I really liked it when I began my career, when I was this unknown rower. I was the only Québec athlete on my team, so they were always talking to me when they were doing a piece on us. It was MY voice that was in the newspaper through Sportcom articles. When a major publication like *Le Journal de Montréal* wanted to write

something on me before the Olympics, it was because of the media presence I had had through Sportcom. I was not able to fully benefit from this extra exposure to find a personal sponsor, because I was in a team sport, studying in Princeton and training outside the province pretty much all the time, but some other athletes benefited of Sportcom existence more than I did; I'm sure the divers are on Sportcom speed dial!" explains Andréanne Morin, who sees a national structure as a great opportunity for the sport community. "Sportcom has always been a good concept that underperformed compared to its potential. Making it national would give Sportcom a second breath for the benefit of the athletes and the federations. Creating a stronger alliance between Sportcom and all the federations would greatly improve the quality of the service."

If Morin had the privilege to benefit from the service, Jeff Christie, on the other hand, couldn't because he was living and training in Alberta. Thinking back on his career, he sees not having access to Sportcom as a missed opportunity: "When I was in Europe or Asia for the three or four months during the World Cup season, the coverage was just dead. It would have helped me, the public would have understood my reality a bit better, and sponsors could have tracked me a bit easier without having me sending emails all the time for support. Our media person would put out press releases after the competition. We had cell phones in Europe for media to call, but it was a passive strategy: "hey, if you want to talk to us we're here."

"Besides, in terms of time management, having the Sportcom reporter calling would have been great. You do one interview and that's it; it's a one-stop shop. The best is Sportcom calls and the media use the content created by Sportcom. What annoys athletes and coaches is when CBC calls, then CTV, then the Globe and Mail, then the Herald. So if you have to do six interviews with six different media, you say no because you have like an hour at the hotel to pack before going to the next race. Not convenient. I'd rather spend 15-20 minutes with one Sportcom reporter than doing 6-7 interviews. From an athlete perspective, you'll get way more buy in with a single source. And when you talk to a Sportcom reporter, you know he knows what he is talking about. Athletes want to talk to people who are passionate and who understand sport. Athletes would be more open if you have this one central location they could feel comfortable talking to. It infuriates athletes you have an interview with a reporter who doesn't know anything about the sport and ask most bizarre and stupid questions."

And when he wears his media person hat (Jeff was the luge color commentator for CBC at the Sochi Games), he sees another great benefit for the media properties.

"The biggest thing that gets lost when you change Olympic broadcaster is the athletes' content. CBC was eight years without talking to the athletes. I really see this thing as a good ability to have continuous content regardless of who is the Olympic broadcaster. Sportcom would be a better way for broadcasters to have quality content, they would have no reason not to buy in. I really like the continuity of it because there's always content created. Sportcom is there whatever the media situation is. It's the ultimate archives. When I was working for CBC, I had to do all my own research for Canadian athletes. I wondered what were Sam Edney's results were in the juniors, these are really hard to find. With Sportcom, I would have had access to everything."

“It helps an outlet like RDS give visibility to our athletes. For us, Sportcom is really important as a news network to get the content we need on Québec amateur athletes we couldn’t get otherwise with our resources. It’s an information complement. Getting content is the main problem for all media. Sportcom facilitates that. The fact that they provide a great quality content is also a great asset because my staff doesn’t have to spend time editing their material. In terms of managing time and resources, it is really important for us. It’s a great window for the athletes to get coverage between the Games, because of Sportcom, they’re not always under the radar. It raises their profile, it puts them on the map, which could eventually lead to private sponsorship”, adds Dumoulin.

For M. Feeney, Sportcom is also like an insurance policy: “I now that results will be communicated back home. It’s a relief because we don’t have to write the releases ourselves, and I can do other things because I know it’s covered off. We see value in that.”

4.1.5 _The feasibility

“Daunting”... “ambitious”... and maybe a “little crazy” too. Endeavour of this magnitude is obviously not an easy task and I expected these reactions from the experts when the topic was explained to them. But, as noted Mark Silver: “This is a worthy topic, what I call a live case that has real world value.”

Even if the task ahead is no piece of cake, experts expressed their optimism in the feasibility of the project because of the market needs and the benefits of such a service.

“From a feasibility point of view, it seems to me it should be viable based on the fact that it already exists at a smaller scale for 15 years. There’s a blue print, we’re not talking about creating something from scratch”, points out Kristina Schaeffer.

“I have been involved with the COC athletes’ commission for six years. Over the last three years, I have seen a huge push movement from the COC to get closer to the athletes. Whether it’s through wellness and after career program, to public speaking seminars, these initiatives allow the COC to tie up contact with athletes. And I think an initiative like Sportcom Canada fits really well with this vision. It would be a logical next step of what’s already existing”, thinks Andréanne Morin.

“With the right people, the right organizations on board and a proper execution, I think it’s definitely feasible. Business will be interested to put their money where users will be. And users will be interested if other users are on it. It’s a really interesting social community idea. For it to succeed, separate things will have to happen together”, weighs Jeff Christie.

“You’ll get a lot of supporters from PSOs and NSOs; there will be a lot of interest, getting people to buy in is really feasible. Coming up with the dollars is a whole different question”, adds Jeff Feeney.

“Funding for amateur sport has a lot of challenges: there is a lot of competition to get the money. So the question for every new initiative is always: is it happening because new money in pumped

in the system or is it going to erode existing funding dedicated to other initiatives?”, wonders Mark Rubinstein.

“From my point of view, as the Olympic broadcaster who is interested in that on an ongoing basis, your potential service has tremendous attractiveness. Universality is key here; all the athletes and the NSOs need to be on board because we need content from everybody, not just two or three sports”, explains Russell.

“It’s highly feasible. The biggest challenge you have is the funding structure. Here’s an interesting option to look at to ensure revenue generation. Big telecommunication companies like Rogers, Bell, Shaw, Corus have to pay some money in the Canadian media fund. These funds have to be redistributed; independent producers go and apply for funding. Interesting part is that if you’re a broadcaster you can’t actually get the money, you need to be using a third party production party. And it’s the third party production company that has to secure distribution with a broadcaster. So it’s kind of self-fulfilling. I think it’s a model to look at”, concludes M. Silver.

4.2 - KSF 1 - The distribution channels

4.2.1 _The renewed offer

“My first years on the national team, we never travelled with our phones. Nowadays, athletes travel with their computers, their cell phones. They can stay connected with Skype. Nowadays, distances aren’t an obstacle anymore because of existing technologies” – Andréanne Morin.

The media and communication landscape has greatly evolved since the day Andréanne Morin first spoke to a Sportcom reporter. In order to stay competitive in this ever evolving environment, Sportcom will have to offer new services to sustain, as pointed out its constituents in the survey conducted last summer. What do my experts think should be done?

To paraphrase the point raised by Jeff Christie in the benefits section, Sportcom should be the one-stop shop for amateur and Olympic sports in Canada.

“THE source, THE reference” as envisions it François Messier. It should become more than just a press release service. In other words, a full go-to destination for all NSOs: “If they’re proactive in identifying which NSO don’t have communications resources, I think they could be a full stop shop: updating their Website, writing their releases, build news pieces around the athletes, or any other internal content; there’s more than just stories for media. They could produce their newsletter, produce little funny videos, take care of their social media, be onsite at National events handling the media requests too and well as doing daily recaps. I think they can fully replace a communications person for NSO that don’t have the budget to have someone or someone full time. They could develop a photo archive, so every story they send out has an action shot of the athletes (this idea of photo archive was also brought to the table by Andréanne Morin), either it’s from this competition or not. Maybe there’s a Sportcom photographer that go around to take these actions shots and you keep those on files for a year, two years”, according to Jeff Feeney.

Also, Feeney and Donna Spencer both referred to a modern calendar and research tool to allow media to better plan ahead: “Maybe it’s a special tool on the Website where you can scroll down by home town. So if you have a reporter from Laval who wants to know when and where athletes from Laval compete, he goes on the Website and sees when you have Laval athletes competing: “Oh cool, Steve is in Beijing this week, Dubai next week, Moscow, etc. That could be interesting”, adds Feeney.

From a media content perspective, Daniel Dumoulin thinks that the content should not be limited to reporting results: “People are looking for heroes, they want to relate, to identify themselves to heroes. Sportcom does well in reporting the result. But what leads to the results? What’s the build up to that medal? Maybe this is where Sportcom needs to refocus. Media want the human interest story in the athletes. You can’t just react to an event, you need to pro-act building up the interest to an event. Let’s say RDS broadcasts Canadian swimming Championships. It’s tough to build the public interest for the event if we just talk about the event the day it begins, we need to build up excitement in advance; we need athletes’ stories/features in advance. How could Sportcom feed the media in advance?”

“Then, we talk about the format. Video is the way to go. Use Skype to get the post-race reaction and emotion. Media will use these contents because we need content, there’s an urgent need to fill. And then we integrate the contents on our platforms: on the same online page, we have the Sportcom text and we have a box you click in to access the video reaction of the athlete... it’s a full Sportcom package”, adds Dumoulin.

Video and Skype... here, all agree it’s the next step to take to make Sportcom interesting on a national basis given the communication reality we live in 2015.

“In 2015, video content is indispensable. All media have interest for that. Ours in particular, especially since the launch of La Presse+ in April 2013, our new tablet app that integrates video in stories. I think it will be easy to convince an athlete to get on board: “Do the video interview with your sponsor logo on your hat, shirt, pin.” And then the athlete tells his sponsor: “Your logo was on La Presse, Radio-Canada, and RDS Websites”, analyses Simon Drouin.

“We have different platforms: television, Web, radio. On TV, I want the Skype interviews clips. We would put that on TV when we broadcast events. This past winter, we had a segment called *Mackenzie financial update*, we would use the actuality, the news of the day to insert these Skype post-race clips. We could use the video clips during our newscasts. We would use the videos on our Website”, points out Scott Russell.

For Mark Silver, it’s simple: “Sportcom has to be thinking beyond the written word. You need to have physical, video, photos. You need jack of all trades, people who are able to write, have a stand-up camera, do an interview, take it back, cut it and post it. That is the way to sustain it, you don’t need a social media person, a video person and a writer... you need someone that can do it all.”

And what is true about video from a media perspective in terms of engaging the public in more effective ways, it is also true for NSOs in terms of their own non-media driven content: “I think

video content is one of the most engaging forms of content. And because we have athletes it's really easy to tell stories which can be more engaging than let's say written article or a tweet. In the case of Alpine Canada, with money we got from the COC through the NSF enhancement initiative, we produced a series of short videos meant to increase the profile of the sport and the athlete across our three disciplines (alpine, para-alpine, ski cross). Part of the reason why we did that was because we wanted to find new ways to bring more sponsors into the sport. We channeled everything through You Tube, Facebook, Twitter and various online channels. It was very effective for us: we engaged consumers, generated lots of views and very good additional sponsorships", explains M. Rubinstein, who's making an insightful connection between athletes' storytelling and ways to generate new revenues.

4.2.2 _The Internet and social media

For experts interviewed, one thing is clear, in 2015, any Sportcom sustainable media strategy must be aligned through the digital and social platforms, which offer an incredible potential. To offer the greatest lifespan possible to all these athletes' videos, whether it is post competition reactions or features, the digital and social platforms must be fully exploited. The technology is there and, as expresses Ms. Morin, this technology is part of athletes' daily lifestyle: "Young athletes are more used than my generation to put part of their life on social media. They put pictures of their breakfast on Twitter, Instagram, it's a natural reflex for them to engage with social media like Facebook, Twitter."

"Athletes will not post only about the race, they will post content like: "Just arrived at the track on Tuesday", "Thursday morning training done", "Got my race bib on Friday". You'll get athletes engaged if there was a way to share around the races. Social media allow to build stories around the races, it shows what being an athlete really is. And it is not like you're adding something to their routine, they are already doing it. If you tell an athlete: "the more you post, the more media will be interested in you, and will start following your story", you will get a great buy-in from them", sees M. Christie.

"If I am running Sportcom Canada, I hire a social media specialist tomorrow morning. These platforms are the key to success. We have already done that at La Presse. Someone manages Twitter account, someone manages Facebook account. You need someone to build up your daily operational plan, what to post, where, when and how. This person would be the social reference for Sportcom reporter on how to present news, how to moderate social discussions", thinks Simon Drouin.

"The great advantage of social media is simple: it enables the digital creation of raw material we have been lacking in the past. What is envisioned here is a tremendous wealth of raw material that we can take and shape into the traditional broadcast as well as getting it out there in a much larger scale on other platforms. More and more what we see with social media and digital platforms is that the participants themselves are the ones providing the content. Once you get the hardware in their hands, they're more than willing to use it and they know how to use it because it's in their best interests to share that material onto various platforms. It would be a great idea to partner with a hardware provider. Our strategy is simple: the more they can produce, the more

we can feed our own Website because there's no limit, and on TV in a more limited way. We have whole section on the Website where it's "in their words" and "from their point of view": people eat that up and we want that on the Website!", insists Scott Russell.

"Video becomes really interesting for social media platforms. People like short contents and like to share it on social media platforms. With video, there's a more entertaining human side to the performance, so it makes it easier for us to push and share these contents through our various social media accounts and bring fans in the RDS environment where they'd have access to more athlete content", thinks M. Dumoulin. "Time is limited on TV. Unfortunately, outside the Olympic window, there is not much TV time available, especially for private sport outlets like RDS, TSN and Sportsnet because most of the space in news casts and broadcast is occupied by hockey. However, on the Internet, that excuse doesn't exist. The space is unlimited, we have all the space available. We just need content to fill in that space. If TSN and Sportsnet are interested to include more digital video content, let's find out what they want, how they want to receive it. Sportcom would need to assess their needs."

In the literature review, I had included figures on the reach of the two most popular social media platforms on the planet: Facebook and Twitter. In terms of engaging media and fans, should a national Sportcom focus equally on both? Mark Silver would not. "If Facebook is not the central part of your strategy for distributing the content, you are in trouble. Facebook helps driving consumption, Twitter is just a race... it's like ambulance chasers. For the athletes, I think Facebook is a more relevant platform because you're dealing with people who will know the athletes, you have to leverage that network as well. You need the athletes to drive their own brand through Facebook. I think raising the brand through Twitter is too much of an effort for the return you'll get. We're biased in the media, we think Twitter is really important because we are highly competitive "media company vs media company" and because this concept of being the person who breaks the news is a concern. Out there in the real world, it's not that important. My professional focus is on the stadium experience and people at the Games. Out of events like the Super Bowl, for example, we're analyzing Wi-Fi consumption in the stadium. And the stats play like this: 5% of consumption is system upgrade, 10% is Instagram, 10% is Twitter... and 60% is Facebook! When you begin to see stats like that, you realize that the audience is on Facebook. The media might not be on Facebook and Facebook is certainly not, unlike Twitter, a place to deliver a real-time message. But to build a brand and engagement, you need Facebook!"

4.2.3 _The by-pass

As I pointed out in the literature review, the social media reality completely changed the paradigm in terms of interaction between sport properties, their fans and the media, in the sense that nowadays properties and athletes can interact directly with their fans without having to use the information vehicle that the media is. A new opportunity for the sports and the athletes to build their fan base, a new challenge for the media.

"Before, the media was the intermediate between the fans and the athletes. That is no longer true.

Now, the athlete will share info by himself directly on his Facebook or Twitter account, he has acquired the notion of scoop. Athletes, teams, leagues produce content. It's positive for the athletes, the fans... essentially to everybody but to the media, we have to adjust and to adapt to this reality because it's a new competition", reflects Daniel Dumoulin.

"It's interesting for me as a broadcaster. On one side, I think it's fantastic that athletes are expressing themselves and we have an appetite for it. On the other hand, I think you still need the story teller, the commentators to give you the context of what is happening. Problem is we cannot, over the air, put on entire events. We still need material that we can edit and shape in order to have in on the air in a contextual manner", adds Scott Russell.

For Todd Denis, the social media environment in which we live in where properties can by-pass traditional media creates opportunities for those willing to take risks. And that's what he would do with Sportcom Canada: "It's so far behind on resources, so far in terms of trying to give exposure to hundreds of "unknown" athletes, that you can take risks that traditional media can't take. CBC is already losing money, they won't take more risks. So I would try things on social media that others won't dare to. I'd go outside the norm. Focus on emerging things like Snapchat. Try to be so far ahead of the curve that people will just say: "what are they doing out there?" It sounds crazy but it's like trying a Hail Mary every single play. You have to build in the Hail Mary in your plan to move to a regular speed. From day 1, building up the appetite for risks and wanting to be two years ahead all the time to make it become a cultural norm. To have people say: "Here they go again!!!"

Denis sees a lot of benefits in that strategy, linking it back to what the COC did for the 2014 Winter Olympic Games: "That was our strategy for Sochi: to be faster than media. Not to cut them out of the equation. But from our perspective to be the source. Eventually the guys with the big resource will like what you're doing or they will either buy you or will crush you. When you become the source, then you get the audience and traffic and the big guys start to trust you. That to me is a pretty interesting little niche for an independent news service to exist: have them point to us, have them find their stuff here and fast. There's a company in the States called Stats Inc.; they are the official data provider for most professional sports. Their business model is based on being faster. Big guys like ESPN should have been the ones to build that, but the other ones were faster and ESPN just said: "let's license it from these guys, they're the source." They just put results online and everybody feeds off from them."

But be careful, insists Mark Silver, in the by-pass environment, there is a fine line and this line should not be crossed: "You need to be complementary, not competitors. You need to be telling the stories they don't want to tell. What you want to become is friendly. You need funding and if your proposal comes with money from big media companies you can't bit the hand that feeds you. You want to produce content for them and hopefully they'll buy your feed. Good content is good content and this will be used. If you focus on quality, and this is a value, it will be used."

Adding on his point on being complementary and not a source of competition, Silver also touches a point raised by Dumoulin on the necessity to pro-act events by creating content: "If

you focus on live windows where the big companies are covering these events and you help market to bring people into the live windows, then you're automatically helping the big media company because if you're having a conversation around something live that is happening people will inevitably want to go watch it. So you're actually bringing people into the broadcast."

4.3 - KSF 2 - The financial sustainability

4.3.1 _The funding private sponsors

The one million dollar question: how to finance the organization and should the money come from the public or the private sector? For the experts, the census is clear: Sportcom Canada could not rely only on public money and should target the private sector.

"The advantage of public money is that the platform can be what it's meant to be with no alternative motive. So you have to weigh the two to see what is going to be the best. If you can secure long term public money without the worry of getting slashed, I would go towards public. But the consistency of funding makes me lead towards private. Because it doesn't matter what government is in power", expresses Jeff Christie. A view shared by Mark Rubinstein: "There's not going to be more money coming from the government. The only way NSOs can do what we need to do to support athletes is by finding private sources of revenue, whether it's sponsorship or philanthropy. And the only way that can happen is if athletes and sport are relevant to Canadians. If they're not relevant to the public, why would a sponsor want to be involved with you?"

Despite some concerns over potential intentions of certain sponsors, like this one expressed by Andréanne Morin: "It's a bit delicate. Let's say a Québec-based company like Cascades decides to fund the project. We'd have to make sure that athletes that are already sponsored by Cascades are not favored to others in the service delivery. It should be a big company that already has a strong presence on amateur sport scene who doesn't want to have a bigger presence. This company should be neutral in the news treatment", experts agree that private sector would have to invest in such a venture to ensure its sustainability.

As a matter of fact, Canada has experienced an important influx of private money in sport system over the last decade. COC is a good example of this momentum with its impressive list of sponsors: RBC, Bell Canada, Canadian Tire, Hudson's Bay Company as premier national partners, Air Canada, BMW-Mini, Petro-Canada and Teck as national partners, Deloitte, General Mills, Molson, The Globe and Mail, Sun Media and Quebecor Media, Mondeley International as official supporters, and Adidas, Oakley, Hilton Honors, Royal Canadian Mint, Stage and Screen, Haworth, CGC and AMJ Campbell as official suppliers.

In which field of activity would lie the best sponsor, the one with the best fit? Given the scope and the nature of the project, companies operating in communications, technology, connectivity and storytelling were the first choice of my experts. And amongst all companies doing business in that industry in Canada, one stood above the others for pundits: Bell Canada.

“Bell is a natural fit. They have a long lasting involvement with the Olympic movement in Canada, they notably pay for the Olympians phone bills”, answers Morin.

"Bell would be the best partner. You need to create something that appeals to what they're doing, the technology side of it, the immediacy of it, the communication aspect", adds Cathy Priestner.

“I think Bell is the strongest opportunity. With their Bell athletes connect program, they provide phone and service to athletes. To the extent that this network would be utilized to shift these stories to the news service. It's a natural connection already. It is really about enabling quicker, easier, real-time, clearer access to Olympian stories, the objective being making sure these athletes better known across the country. That doesn't mean we would not be able to have RBC, for example, as a sponsor for Sportcom. RBC is all about kids, family and communities, and “achieving your someday.” That doesn't mean the stories they tell don't fit. But, here, we're talking about a news service. We first have to start looking for the companies that are closely aligned with that”, thinks Kristina Schaeffer.

For M. Dumoulin, Bell Canada, for whom he works, RDS being a property of Bell, is also a natural fit for such a sponsorship. But for him, the involvement goes beyond the simple dollars on the table: “We're talking here about youth, surpassing oneself... everything is positive about being associated to star role models. Bell is a pan-Canadian company, the biggest company in the country in terms of employees (65 000). Creating a partnership between both entities, using the strength of the athletes to connect with the employees to build a company active lifestyle program, you now spread the word about Sportcom to 65 000 people across the country, 65 000 potential influencers. So the involvement is not strictly financial, it's combined in a larger strategy. Bell strongly positioned itself with the *Let's talk* program to raise awareness on mental health in Canada. What would prevent Bell to be a national mentor in physical activity, while putting the athletes on the front of the scene? You then have an amazing content production potential.”

Jeff Christie also thinks that the main sponsor should be in communications industry, but he has a different take and doesn't see Bell as his first choice: “I would look outside Canada, not that's it's easy but... Take big companies that operate in digital media and social companies. Yahoo, Google, etc. Essentially, people whose business model is based on content creation. What the platform is doing is creating content to push out to mass market. Even think about something like Hootsuite, a Vancouver-based company managing social media platform. Hootsuite helps you push outbound messages to multiple social media platforms. They're huge, multimillion dollar company. I'm also thinking about a company like MailChimp, another huge company making money hands over fists with distribution-based products.”

The content creation platform aspect is also an element that resonates strongly in Todd Denis' assessment: “Twitter is still an emerging platform and they're based on speed. If we go national, I'd suggest to partner with Twitter. Talk to them about the future potential. This is raw potential. If we want Twitter to be the most far reaching arm of this platform, ask Twitter to see how we can get there. We're small market but we're the size of California and that's significant. And we

had good luck in Sochi with them as an emerging platform vs Facebook. They're more concerned about continuing to grow and cutting than they are about pure revenue. I'd literally bring them in that way. Even if they drag and loose relevancy, you know you're with them because of their speed, that's the key thing that they do, that's the great equalizer. And when a new platform emerges, you then partner with them because they're twice as fast as Twitter."

4.3.2 _The public dollars

Though experts agree that private sector would have to play a role and that it's getting tougher and tougher to get governments to fund such initiatives, Sportcom Canada should not not attempt to get a financial buy in from the public sector. At the federal level, Sport Canada is the largest contributor for elite sport and its contribution should be a key element to the financial sustainability of the program.

Besides, the leverage opportunity between the federal and the provinces should also be exploited to its full potential to gather public money, according to Priestner: "Sport Canada is primarily a funding arm. If the COC can put together a proposal that would have the enforcement of the provinces, you probably have a pretty good opportunity with Sport Canada. Sport Canada also has bilaterals with the provinces, under which they have matching funds. This could be an interesting initiative because it would have the provinces contributing too. With a sound framework, I would talk to key provinces, the largest ones, to initiate the movement; Ontario, British Columbia, Manitoba, Alberta. If you get the buy in from these provinces, you then submit a proposal to Sport Canada and say "we talked to provinces and we think we can get matching funds."

"The government of Canada invests a lot of money in our athletes. To me, Sportcom Canada becomes a tool to add value to the support he's providing to athletes, it's a complement to their investment strategy. In all the money they invest, there should be existing money they could use to offer a better return on investment in terms of visibility", assesses Messier.

4.3.3 _The NSOs

According to Jeff Feeney, NSOs should also be financial partners in this adventure because he sees great benefits for them, like increased exposure for their athletes and cost saving: "The main benefit would probably be cost saving. There's a lot of stuff that NSOs do independently. If you centralize the service and get a good core group of people who do the same thing day in and day out, let's say 25 people for the NSOs in the same role, splitting their time between events and communications, operations (we spend anywhere between 12 000 and 15 000 dollars a year on outsource media relations support, for instance additional help pulling out a media conference in x city, or media tour or post event stories), NSOs could save there and spend money on other people working in sport. So if we were getting the same equivalent amount of service for less money while paying to build this great new service where more people can tap, let's go. Right now, we've got individual contractors who do this for you but not everybody can afford them. I see it for NSOs to save some money and office space, make their operations a bit more nimble. And reinvest in sport performance side. Centralizing this could have a podium effect too. I think NSOs would be willing to participate financially to have more exposure for their athletes."

Feeney pushes the logic a bit further more on tiers of subscription, thinking that even athletes could individually contract Sportcom Canada: “I wouldn’t see a flat rate thing, if a NSO uses it more they’d logically pay more. You commit to x amount of money at the start of the year to use these pre purchased services, maybe there’s tiers of membership, like your cable company. It’s not an all equal cost-share. Even if it’s more affordable for some people to use, some people will use it more. And maybe it’s a service/membership that the athlete can buy individually outside a federation. Let’s say there’s this pentathlete that is super keen and he buys an athlete package because the federation has no money and he pays to have its own Website.”

From a managerial point of view, the CEO of Alpine Canada also thinks the cost saving is a possibility to seize, using social media metrics to assess the success of the operation: “How you work with those larger NSOs to help them maximize what they’re already doing is one approach. With NSOs that are less sophisticated, probably this more universal approach is going to be helpful. Also it could be a cost saving opportunity. But depends on the quality of the service you’re getting for the money you’re paying. If you can get the same or better quality for less money, everybody will agree with that. If it turns out the quality doesn’t meet what you think it should be, maybe you don’t mind spending a little more to get the expected quality. The great thing about social media is you get a report every day and it’s not subjective: you’re either getting more fans, more followers, more engagement or you’re not. It’s a really objective way to see the numbers and see if you’re losing money. The metrics are easily accessible.”

4.3.4 _The COC

As for the COC, whom is seen as the main catalyst able to bring the main partners around the table in order to work towards the right alignment, as I will touch upon in the next chapter, most of experts agree that its financial contribution will be key to the success of Sportcom Canada.

Why? Because, “the COC is the only one organization who can financially benefit from an increased exposure in a major way. The sport can to a certain degree. It makes sense that increased exposure in all media on a regular basis will increase COC’s ability to go to market”, according to Ken Bagnell.

A remark that echoes also to Priestner: “The COC should largely fund it. It’s their athletes. With this core funding, you can go see provinces and ask “can do to leverage that and get some additional government funding” or go to private side to see if there’s a property that has an interest and look what we might get from that.”

4.4 - KSF 3 - The partners’ alignment

4.4.1 _The COC

Another vital factor for the success of Sportcom Canada will be the right alignment of partners and stakeholders of the sport system in Canada.

According to the experts, to tie up with what was brought up previously, the COC would have to play a central role to lead the implementation of Sportcom Canada, not necessarily to create the organization, but to use its leadership, voice, and reputation to gather decision makers around a table to start a dialogue on the question. And, first and foremost, to have the buy-in from key actors: the athletes. “Athletes like being involved with the COC because it is a cool brand. It’s got sex appeal. When the COC asks something, athletes say “yeah, I’d love to do it!” I don’t know a lot of athletes who don’t want to do stuff with the COC; they are interesting, they are engaging”, notes Jeff Christie.

“Obviously, the COC can play a leadership role. And they have an expertise from a marketing and communications perspective that I think would be helpful”, according to M. Rubinstein.

The COC has invested a lot of effort in the last years in order to align the sport system through various initiatives, like the NSF enhancement initiative. Essentially, this strategy could be summarized in two words: one team. Having the whole sport system speaking with the same unified voice is key to a sustainable sport community and to Team Canada. And this #oneteam concept echoes loud for my experts in order to find the right alignment of partners.

“Like the president of the COC keeps on repeating: #oneteam #oneteam. It’s all about the one team concept. The more we look at ourselves as being part of one team, all with different roles and responsibilities, the stronger we are. The province of British Columbia is in the process of signing a memorandum of understanding with the COC. It’s the first one of its kind. The provinces are also partnering on the NSF enhancement initiative. We’re going to utilize the tool that has been developed and apply it to PSOs in BC. We’re a pilot for the country. The next province to do this as well is probably Quebec. I think your provincial partner is absolutely critical because this partner connects with the province. With your provincial partner, you get then connection with all the provincial organizations. The agreement we have in BC is: ViaSport and COC. In Québec, you would sign agreement with the ministry of sport and education. You have to take unique approach in each province. At the end of the day, you need to be able to say that ministries across the country: “support these partnerships initiatives because they are important.” And then we, ViaSport, can talk to government. So the more COC pushes out provincially, the stronger these will be. They’ve never really done it in the past. And now they’re doing it, so this is great”, explains Priestner.

Piggybacking on the alignment made possible through the COC with the provincial partners, Priestner also sees an opportunity to add another distribution channel in the different provinces for the Sportcom created content: “How does ViaSport TV take advantage of it? Even featuring the Sportcom articles or stories on our platform is something we can definitely look at. Athletes are role models for kids in sport, so how we can utilize that? We could use the elite athletes’ stories and results to connect with young athletes on our platform. Maybe the province should become a distributor and get the stuff out in the community. That’s what we do; we’re about pushing out content. Even if our organization doesn’t look only at Olympic and Paralympic athletes, we take sport as a whole... from 5 to 80 year-old athletes, it is beneficial for us even if it’s only one element in our communication strategy.”

For M. Bagnell, the planets are aligned right now and the sport community should use this positive timing to move forward regarding Sportcom Canada: “The timing is good right now. This would not have been possible 10 years ago because COC was insular. They didn’t really have an interest. That has significantly changed; COC has shown that they have a broad interest. Having a centralized process would only make sense. It’s the natural step to take, it’s how to bring a system together. We’re scratching at the surface. But a partnership allows us to say: “okay well that’s nice, what’s the next phase?” This is one element of a bigger picture in terms of collaboration between stakeholders. We already have the bases for partnership, for regional distribution. It is just a natural step to take and I think the opportunity is much closer than you think. Sometimes it’s not easy with COC, CPC and OTP, but I think it’s the next step.”

More specifically, M. Bagnell sees a natural benefit for the Canadian sport institutes/centers to partner with Sportcom through the COC: “I see real opportunities down that road. A communication, marketing service makes total sense, I would see one Sportcom Canada staff working at my facility in Halifax. Unfortunately, we don’t have a single vehicle to tell athletes stories to Canadians, there’s no mechanism to do that. It’s a promotional opportunity for our athletes. The recent announcement of the new name of the centers/institutes to Canadian Olympic and Paralympic network helps hugely here (**on January 7th 2015, the seven individual Canadian sport institutes and centers were renamed the Canadian Olympic and Paralympic Sport Institutes Network – COPSIN). I’ve always seen ourselves as branches of the COC, CPC and OTP. That’s what we should be; while our role has been primarily to focus on athletes and coaches services side, it offers a broader opportunity that doesn’t imply a huge financial ticket to it.”

Jeff Christie also sees a benefit for the COPSIN: “It would be a renewed push for the institute network to get stronger, that would be the best place to somehow reside because they truly do have the best touch to the athletes. They have a lot of contact with the athletes. I think CSI are getting a lot better.”

4.4.2 _The NSOs

As for the NSOs, their participation will be crucial in the orchestration of a strategy to implement Sportcom Canada. Besides their financial implication, as addressed in the chapter on sustainability, their buy-in will be essential to the existence of Sportcom Canada, according to the experts.

“The NSOs would be a key partner. It has to be relevant to NSOs and help solve problems of NSOs”, thinks M. Rubinstein.

“They need to be on board because you’ll be talking to their athletes. They should say yes you’re talking about our athletes, you’re helping our sport”, thinks Jeff Christie.

For Russell, to ensure the universality of the service and its long term sustainability, tying it back to his answer on the feasibility of the project and adding on Christie’s point, the “yes” from all NSOs is essential. To illustrate the importance of the NSOs chip-in, from a logistical point of view, he provides two examples, that have direct impact on information dissemination by media

and that could be resolved with better partnership media and sports: “2015 World Sprint speed skating championships in Kazakhstan. Because there was no SSC media person onsite, our producers asked the athletes directly to record something on their iPad after their races and email it to us. We were broadcasting the event and wanted actuality and reaction clips from the athletes. It was ad hoc, hit and miss; we got some, we didn’t get others. Didn’t really work out. When the biathlete Emma Lunder won her silver medal this winter, we couldn’t unfortunately get any reaction from her. So from my point of view, as the Olympic broadcaster, who’s interested in that on an ongoing basis, this potential service with tremendous attractiveness will work if you have to get all NSOs on board.”

4.4.3 _The media partners

Despite all the changes that occurred in the industry because of social media, the mainstream media is still an important information vehicle between the sports and the public. And partnerships or alliances between Sportcom Canada and media have to be considered. For Québec media representatives interviewed, mainstream media are part of the solution. To make sure eventual partnerships are well aligned, their message is simple: open up the chain of communication between both parties.

“An action item Sportcom should be to force media to share with them their needs before competitions to help Sportcom better serve them. If Sportcom knows how media intend to cover this World Championship or this World Cup, they’ll adjust and offer complementary service. RDS already does that with Canadian Press. CP is requesting meetings with us, we exchange and tell when what we need for the FIFA Women’s World Cup, for example. We told them we need more players profile to help create a build-up for the event. Because we work together, they know our needs and work accordingly”, explains Dumoulin.

“Sportcom needs to meet more often with newsrooms. You need a physical representation to convince. Newsroom are so overwhelmed with professional sport; you can’t just exchange by emails. You need to shake hands, to deliver a structured pitch in person. Sportcom could obviously partner Canadian Press, but CP is not alone, I’m thinking about QMI, Gesca too”, adds Drouin.

If Canadian Press could be a potential partner ally for Sportcom Canada, Ms. Spencer doesn’t think Sportcom should model its national structure on CP’s model: “We produce and filter content through several portals to multiple digital platforms across the country. I see a national Sportcom as content for one portal.”

As for the rights-holder broadcaster, a potential alliance seems natural for M. Russell: “From my own perspective, it can be a great partnership the Olympic broadcaster and the COC. It serves both interests really well. We need to increase the profile of our Olympic athletes, especially between Games-time, and we need to work together in order to do it. And the NSOs have to play ball. They have to realize that they can’t get all their Canadian championships or World Championships on CBC. We just can’t afford to do that. But we can, if we cooperate,

disseminate the information and get the word out about these athletes on a more consistent basis. I think the three partners have to be CBC, COC, whose best interest is to get the word out the Canadian Olympic team, and all the NSOs. And whoever is the umbrella organization that puts all that together is the independent organization that runs Sportcom Canada. I think it's a great idea and I think the Olympic broadcaster has to be involved in helping to develop this."

4.5 - The legal

Even though it is not a key success factor per se, I also wanted to touch upon the legal aspect of a Sportcom Canada, in terms of potential commercial rights infringements, athletes' image rights and implications with the soon to be launched IOC's Olympic Channel, to make sure that no conflict could arise from the creation of a national structure that would be creating video content for dissemination to media.

For Kristina Schaeffer, it is worth spending some time thinking about it, but she doesn't seem too concerned about it if the content stays informational: "The way I view this is live news dissemination, so it's not necessarily promotional content. In the grand scheme of things it should not matter if it's pure news content. Think about the CBC broadcasts at Olympic Games. They do interview with athletes and not a minute later ending with a wrapping that says "this segment brought to you by RBC". Over time, everyone has become comfortable with the fact that it's truly news and that a company is helping to underwrite the dissemination of that news. If this is respected, then that's fine and there's no really commercial rights implications."

"The issue is when the content becomes more promotional in its nature. Think about a special feature between athletes and their moms, followed by a Proctor & Gamble "Thank you Mom!" campaign wrapper. That's when it feels very promotional, very marketing, tied to that company."

"So the Sportcom platform would be brought to you by Bell (the mast head or the bottom). Yes, it is part of the framing of the news story but it's not being tied promotionally to that news. The moment you start talking about that news being about an athlete being connected through its Bell phone in Helsinki, then you start blurring the line and have to be careful. And you'd have to be very clear, transparent and communicate properly with all athletes, NSFs, agents. When it is news brought to you by Bell, this shouldn't be a problem even for a Telus-sponsored (or any other competitor) athlete. As long as the communications are proactive upfront, then it shouldn't be a problem", assesses the partnerships expert.

For Sarah-Ève Pelletier, COC's Deputy General Counsel, "it is also important to ask the question because broadcasting rights are a complex matter. Some rights to sporting events are sold on an exclusive basis, some non-exclusively. Exclusive rights can be global whereas others can be sold on a media-by-media or territory-by-territory basis."

"There can be limitations to exclusivity such as with respect to news access rules for specific sporting events and in accordance with national laws. Also, exclusivity usually extends only to

the sporting event per say and will rarely touch upon content outside of the field of play, such as athletes' interviews or features pre/post events.”

“Individual athletes can have exclusive or priority deals for certain interviews, but Sportcom could potentially seek itself such priority interviews with interested athletes. In that sense, limitations or potential issues in terms of rights holding infringements would be limited if Sportcom's concept focused on content captured outside the perimeter of competition zones and doesn't create confusion as to the status of the relevant exclusive rights holding broadcasters”, adds Pelletier.

As for limitations in terms of rights to athletes' image, the lawyer doesn't seem too concern either for Sportcom's access to athletes: “Athletes don't tend to give exclusive rights to a certain media for coverage. They can, although, give out an exclusive story to a certain media on a specific topic.”

As for the IOC's Olympic Channel, “right now the biggest challenge with thinking about answering any question on the concept is that we don't really know what it will look like, what content it will deliver. In absence of clarity on the content, the world has to keep moving. So I wouldn't want to see a project of this nature being slowed down because of the “what-ifs” around an Olympic Channel. Whatever it's going to be, it's going to be great. But we don't really know right now and the rest of us can't wait. And who knows, maybe this national content we're talking about creating might ultimately feed all or in part a wider and global offering some day. Wouldn't be great to establish ours for the national needs first and influence others?”, thinks Schaeffer.

For Pelletier, the rationale is similar: “As part of Agenda 2020, the IOC has announced its intention to launch an Olympic Channel, which would be first an international digital channel. Right now, it is difficult to talk in details about the implications of this channel, because its programming and distribution strategy haven't been released yet. While the specific content of the channel can't be assessed, it would be unlikely that it only covers live sporting events such as the Olympic Games or other high selling IF properties, because of the exclusive broadcast rights already granted to rights holding broadcasters, which finance in large part the Olympic movement”

“Also, with a year-long and ongoing digital presence, it is anticipated that the Olympic Channel will require an extensive amount of fresh content to populate its programming schedule. In such context, it is worth considering the Olympic Channel as an opportunity for distribution of compelling sport content and foreseeing win-win collaborative strategy with this upcoming global market player”, concludes the lawyer.

4.6 - The expectations

Asking to participants in each stream what would be, in their opinion, the expectations of all the other streams potentially involved in the project (athletes, NSOs, media, institutes, and sponsors) proved to be a real interesting exercise. Getting the input of people from different professional perspective allowed me to gather a large variety of points of view. I compiled in five different boxes the most interesting answers.

Athletes

@ Honest and effective representation of their brand

- Jeff Christie

@ Maybe it's a mistake, but most athletes will expect that sponsors will automatically pay more attention because they're covered by Sportcom. You need more than one good result and one article to get a sponsor. You also need personality an agent, a unique story, etc.

- Andréanne Morin

@ To feel the first mission of Sportcom is to be at their service, suited based on their reality, that they're involved and being solicited for the good reasons to create their engagement

- Daniel Dumoulin

@ To be profiled and covered

- Cathy Priestner

@ Some equity in the storytelling. Their story is as important as the next story.

- Ken Bagnell

@ To make their lives easier and not lose control over their brand or their voice

- Kristina Schaeffer

@ For it not to interfere with what I'm trying to do: competing. To be easily manageable

- Scott Russell

@ A quality product, reported by someone who knows sport, to ensure athletes are more disposed to express themselves

- Simon Drouin

@ That the service doesn't just benefit to the star athletes. The young athlete that finishes 20th his first years on the international stage needs a presence in public space, for him to be able to build his own brand. Dissemination of information is also important for this young athlete

- François Messier

National sport organisations

@ For initiatives that broadens the profile of sport, athletes have to be linked directly with revenue and partnership opportunities. To do all this work and not seeing the needle move would be disappointing

- Mark Rubinstein

@ To have athletes treated fairly, the possibility for us to use on own Website, that media will receive material in a timely manner

- Jeff Feeney

@ They'll want as much exposure on their sport as they can have

- Cathy Priestner

@ Think they'll quickly land big sponsorships because their athletes' names will be in newspapers more often. Media visibility is just one element of the strategy of finding sponsors. You still need a lead man to execute the pitch

- Andréanne Morin

@ That the athletes aren't overwhelmed by process. They'll also want to use it to better market themselves

- Kristina Schaeffer

@ To see their athletes at the center of the strategy, that it is done for the good reasons to feel engaged and to see results

- Daniel Dumoulin

@ To get more visibility in order to secure new revenues and attract new athletes in the sport

- François Messier

@ More coverage and favorable coverage, especially if they chip in financially

- Mark Silver

@ That this will not be a huge financial burden on them. They will be able to showcase their athletes by making an investment by getting some help from other partners

- Scott Russell

@ For the NSOs with no communications staff, to have a system in place to help them promote their athletes across the country. For the NSOs that do have communications staff, it would give them more time to focus on other communications items than just writing press releases

- Simon Drouin

Media

@ Good communication, content, complementarity, not trying to compete with media. To help media put athletes at the center of the priorities, to help media make the athletes shine
- Daniel Dumoulin

@ Get as much material as we can... and the right material. To know that if X athlete wins a medal, Sportcom will have her clip right away
- Scott Russell

@ Speed and diversity of information, using modern communication tools like video
- Simon Drouin

@ That a national Sportcom would be a one-stop shop of accurate, up-to-date information for our needs
- Donna Spencer

@ The commitment to quality, unbiased, credible and authentic voice and content
- Mark Silver

@ Tying into that will make it easier for them to cover, saving the headache of doing it, which they can't... it's a resource supplement, like Stats Inc.
- Todd Denis

@ Multi platforms content with quotes and factual information delivered quickly
- François Messier

@ Amazing content that can draw viewers
- Jeff Christie

@ Unfiltered and full access right away
- Kristina Schaeffer

@ Reliable partner with timely delivery and good distribution tools
- Ken Bagnell

Institutes

@ Getting the word out. We don't have any media capacity now; we should. Our stories are the athletes and coaches stories. The benefit is for the public to know what's going on, to know there's a concentration of athletes in Toronto, Montréal, Vancouver in multisport environment

- Ken Bagnell

@ Exposure for what they're doing: they are deeply involved in sport science, research, top secret stuff, what they do that is pretty cool

- Cathy Priestner

@ To me, INS is the best kept secret in town. Their potential is enormous, they should be opening their doors to show to the public all the work that they do to build champions. They partner with Sportcom but they haven't understood how to promote themselves

- François Messier

@ They would want the public to know where elite sport money is going and that it's well used

- Jeff Feeney

@ They would want to use the Sportcom produced material for educational and research purposes, and share within their own networks and communities

- Scott Russell

@ To be recognized for what they accomplish. Athletes often mention in Sportcom articles about the experts help they're getting from INS in Montréal. The institutes are parts of the athletes' stories. It's really motivating for the staff to see that athletes recognize their work.

- Simon Drouin

Sponsors

@ A great return on their investment

- Mark Rubinstein

@ Not to be a heavy lift. "Not another program, another thing we have to be responsible for"

- Kristina Schaeffer

@ Access to the athletes

- Mark Silver

@ That public gains interest for its brand, that his message is understood

- Daniel Dumoulin

4.7 - The SWOT analysis

For the SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) analysis, I asked every contributor to identify one element for each of the four SWOT boxes. I compiled all their answers and built the table based on the best responses, to my opinion, I collected during the interview process.

INTERNAL TO SPORTCOM

<u>STRENGTHS</u>	<u>WEAKNESSES</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">@Athletes are young and tech-savvy@Effective, cheaper communication tools@There is a market for it@Sportcom credibility as news producer@ Multi platforms attractiveness@The need... it is clearly there@Athletes know they'll get coverage@Athletes standing/prestige@Athletes exposure coast to coast to get them on board@The intent to serve a great purpose, not just make money	<ul style="list-style-type: none">@Difficulty to self-finance, lack of resources@Geography of the country@Universality (get all NSOs on board)@Not enough content created@The quality of content producers and their credibility@Being on the edge all the time (constant Hail Mary strategy)@Logistics of figuring out the best model: province-by-province or national right away@Message control from sports who can afford in-house staff

EXTERNAL TO SPORTCOM

<u>OPPORTUNITIES</u>	<u>THREATS</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">@Fierce competition within media conglomerates@Demonstrate how we can align Canada sport system@New norm in media is that there's no standard sets@Connect/engage Canadians with athletes more often on more platforms outside the Olympic window@Make athletes more accessible to public@Fill the gap that media/teams aren't filling@Get NSFs on board because of the need for content	<ul style="list-style-type: none">@A brand/mission that is not fully understood@New norm in media is that there's no standard sets... being rolled over@Jealousy, competition from certain NSOs@Budget fluctuation if essentially funded by public money + money dictating content and controls the market (private sponsor)@A tool only used by a handful of athletes and loses its universality@Traditional media companies wanting to own that content@Alignment of external partners@Incompetent staff who prefer status quo



5- Recommendations

After spending the last ten months on this research, reading books, articles and magazines, interviewing 15 experts in their respective field in sport in Canada, analyzing their answers, over thinking about the topic day and night, weekdays and weekends, discussing about it with friends and colleagues, I came up with a set of recommendations, six in total, that touch upon, in their own different way, the three key success factors identified at the beginning of the research to ensure that a Sportcom Canada could thrive and sustain in order to serve better the athletes.

One_ Raise brand awareness

Two_ Involve the COC

Three_ Get the NSOs on board

Four_ Secure private funding

Five_ Get the right business plan

Six_ Talk to media

One_ Raise brand awareness: Before talking about any project of expansion outside Québec, Sportcom has to raise its brand awareness in key circles outside the province: governmental (provincial, federal), sport organizations (COC, institutes, NSOs, PSOs), and media outlets. Whether it is done by Sportcom itself or with the help of MELS, a strong ambassador (a star athlete who benefited from the service) with the pilgrim staff should take the lead in meeting (at a national forum on sport, as suggested Messier) these key influencers to talk about the concept, gaps it fills, benefits for the athletes, and to share its success in athletes' profiling over the last 15 years.

Two_ Involve the COC: Whether is through helping creating a round table in order to identify the influencers and partners to partake in the project or through its financial implication, the COC, because of its national scope, the leadership it has shown in the last few years with initiatives to improve the quality of the system across the country, and its expertise in marketing, communications and commercial partnerships, should be a key player in the implementation of such a national structure. Sportcom should consider a partnership with the COC from day 1.

Three_ Get the NSOs on board: having the buy-in from the National sport organizations is crucial to the success of any project of expansion. As it was explained in the data analysis, it is their athletes that are being profiled by Sportcom. And to ensure universality of the service, for all athletes, all NSOs have to contribute to access to athletes, after competitions, for example. As Rubinstein expressed it, this service has to help solve problems for NSOs in terms of athletes' promotion. To achieve this, the COC should take a strong lead to work with the NSOs and continue the work that it has done over the last few years to align the sport system in the country.

Four_ Secure private funding: Money is your oxygen. You might have the best heart condition (pumping stories through efficient distribution channels) and the best blood circulation (good partners' alignment allowing seamless operations), if you don't have oxygen, you can't survive. With a renewed offer across the country, Sportcom has a legitimate shot at securing public money on both provincial (ministries of sport) and federal (Sport Canada), but a lot of emphasis has to be put on private sources of funding. Bell has been identified by many experts as the best fit for Sportcom because of the nature of both entities and their complementarity. A strong push should be done to approach the company to level their interest in improving athletes' storytelling across the country using their platforms, technologies. And if Bell is not too keen about this idea, pursue some other private institutions that have been identified in the research, such as Twitter or Yahoo!

Five_ Get the right business plan: Due to time limitations, my research didn't require me to build a business plan for a future Sportcom Canada. Besides, it is not my expertise to conduct such endeavor. Using the existing operational budgets from Sportcom, a business plan/model will have to be tailored for Sportcom Canada. "Whether it is tapping existing Deloitte VIK or going to them independently with a new opportunity, I think they would be a great organization to start with, this is pretty much what they do", reflects Kristina Schaeffer. Essential COC partner in the NSF enhancement initiative, Deloitte should be approached to develop a business plan for a Sportcom Canada, as they have tools, experience and knowledge of sport system in Canada. Moreover, Mark Silver's company, Stadium Digital, specializes itself in finding digital solution for sport properties. They could also provide expertise and input, with their experience in the field, in tailoring a good business model for Sportcom

Six_ Talk to media: media should be considered as partners, like NSOs, COC, funding arms, etc. Despite the multiplication of platforms to vehicle the information in the last decade, mainstream media are key to get the athletes' news to Canadians and to have Canadians care more about athletes. Opening up the communication channels between Sportcom and the media will allow Sportcom to better understand how media can/want/will cover athletes' feats and what are media needs and objectives (material desired, methods of delivery) to better promote the athletes on their platforms. Working hand in hand with media could go far in the way of partners' alignment.



6- Conclusion

To conclude this research project, I would, first and foremost, like to put the emphasis on the fact that the data analysis shows the multiple connections that exist between the three key success factors and their interdependency. Experts see the COC as a major enabler for this project, an organization that can use its leadership across the country to gather around the same table the influencers that could work together towards the creation of a national Sportcom, in order to identify the best possible network of partners for the project. But the COC role obviously doesn't stop with the alignment. Its involvement also impacts the two other key success factors. Besides being identified as a potential important funding party, the COC is also seen as a partner that could help targeting private sponsors, because of its own wide pool of corporate sponsors, to ensure the financial sustainability of Sportcom Canada. Experts mostly pointed out to Bell Canada, a COC sponsor, as the best fit for this venture. Why? Because Bell has the technology, the resources and the network to implement a system that will improve the distribution of the created content.

Same multi key success factors approach applies for the National sport organizations. They are essential partners to the journey because it's their athletes Sportcom Canada will need access to, without them in the partners alignment, the success of Sportcom Canada would be in jeopardy. Without access to their athletes, it would be highly impossible to distribute universal and continuous content to media and other partners. And their financial chip-in, pointed out as an opportunity to save money through a central service, would be a great asset for the long term sustainability of Sportcom Canada.

Idem for the media. They're a crucial element in the distribution of the content throughout their platforms. Because of the immense potential of information dissemination, they also have to be seen as partners and partners opportunities have been identified with media experts, like Russell and Drouin, to fill the gap in content media is seeking to close. Which leads to, funding-wise, two potential scenarios here: 1- a situation where competition between media is high and one outlet wishes to pay extra money to Sportcom to get some exclusive content 2- funding comes from all these new media outlets across Canada that wish to pay to get athletes' content, like a regular press agency, through a service that had never been offered to them before.

The goal with this research is not to solve all at once all the problems of Olympic athletes' sub-par exposure. Participants in that research have pointed out that there is a serious lack of content on our Canadian athletes. And it's not because these athletes are not performing well on the world stage. Canadian athletes perform well, win medals at Olympic Games, World Cups, and World Championships and deserve a loud voice they don't have right now. This has to change, something must be done to ensure their stories get to Canadians across the country. The goal of that research is simple: to engage a national dialogue in Canada to solve that matter, to put ideas on the table to give athletes the voice they deserve. Of course, creating this new structure won't be an easy task and it won't magically appear by a snap of the fingers. But as sport managers, it is our duty to show leadership and work together to find solutions. Our athletes deserve it.



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7.2 – Abstract

English: Despite a certain effervescence since the 2010 Vancouver Olympic Games, a notable popularity on social media at the London 2012 and Sochi 2014 Games and a strong Canadian Olympic brand, athletes competing in Olympic sports in Canada suffer from a latent lack of visibility in media because of a clear scarcity of available athletes' content between each edition of Olympic Games. Since more than 15 years, there is in Québec an independent news agency named Sportcom that carries out a daily coverage of so-called amateur athletes, when these compete around the world. Using this pre-existing model in this province of Canada, the objective of the research is essentially to identify by which manners it would be possible to apply and export the Sportcom recipe across the country. The intention here is not to create and implement this structure the day after handing out my research, but rather to propose a roadmap that could lead to the creation of Sportcom Canada, focusing the research on the key success factors essential to the realization of such an enterprise. Over my readings, three key success factors have been identified: the proper channels of information distribution, the financial sustainability and the right network/alignment of partners. In a time where Internet and social media allow almost unlimited possibilities to disseminate information, where the private sector invests more and more in Olympic sport in Canada and where the Canadian Olympic Committee is putting a lot of effort to align our sport system from one ocean to another with various stakeholders, it is allowed to think that the timing is on our side to implement such a structure, whose primary goal is to offer a better visibility to Canadian athletes.

Français : Malgré une certaine effervescence depuis les Jeux olympiques de Vancouver 2010, une popularité notable sur les médias sociaux aux Jeux de Londres 2012 et Sotchi 2014 et une marque olympique canadienne forte, les athlètes concourant dans les sports olympiques au Canada souffrent d'un manque latent de visibilité dans les médias en raison d'une vraisemblable carence de contenu disponible entre chaque édition des Jeux. Depuis une quinzaine d'années, il existe au Québec une agence de presse indépendante nommée Sportcom qui assure une couverture quotidienne des athlètes dits amateur, alors que ceux-ci se retrouvent en compétition aux quatre coins du monde. En se basant sur le modèle déjà existant dans cette province du Canada, le but de la recherche est essentiellement d'identifier par quels moyens il serait possible d'appliquer et d'exporter la recette Sportcom à l'ensemble du pays. L'objectif ici n'est pas de créer et d'implanter cette structure au lendemain du dépôt du projet mais plutôt de proposer un plan d'action pouvant conduire à la création d'un Sportcom Canada en axant la recherche sur les facteurs-clé essentiels à la réussite d'une telle entreprise. Au fil des lectures, trois facteurs-clé ont été identifiés, soit les réseaux de distribution de l'information, l'autonomie financière et le bon alignement des partenaires. À une époque où Internet et les médias sociaux permettent un monde pratiquement infini de possibilités quant à la diffusion de l'information, où le secteur privé s'investit de plus en plus dans le sport olympique au Canada et où le Comité olympique canadien travaille d'arrache-pied dans le but d'aligner le système sportif canadien d'un océan à l'autre avec différents acteurs, il est permis de croire que le timing est excellent pour l'implantation d'une telle structure dont le but premier est de donner une meilleure visibilité aux athlètes canadiens.

7.3 - ANNEX

QUICK SPORTCOM FACTS AND FIGURES

Organizational structure - as of August 2015

5 employees: 1 executive director + 4 writers / journalists

A board of directors of 6 members (9 fall 2014 and 8 spring 2015)

Funding partners

L'Institut national du sport du Québec

Sports-Québec

La Fondation de l'athlète d'excellence du Québec

Le Conseil du sport de haut niveau de Québec

Annual budget for upcoming year

400 000 \$

Quantity of publications for 2014 and 2015

April 2014	127
May 2014	145
June 2014	139
July 2014	161
August 2014	127
September 2014	119
October 2014	83
November 2014	118
December 2014	99
January 2015	114
February 2015	157
March 2015	178
Total	1567

Equals an average of 4.29 publications/day

That includes all Sportcom texts, and partners and clients publications

Athletes “covered” by Sportcom

As of august 2015: approximately 400 athletes (of which approximately are 60 para athletes) are covered by Sportcom. Eligible athletes are elite athletes that are part of Équipe Québec, a program developed by Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et des Sports. These athletes compete in over 30 summer sports, 12 winter sports, 14 para summer sports, and 3 para winter sports.

EXAMPLES OF RECENT SPORTCOM PUBLISHED ARTICLES

Natation – Championnats du monde FINA

Katerine Savard un peu à court

Montréal, 3 août 2015 (Sportcom) – La nageuse Katerine Savard (57,69 s) a pris le cinquième rang de la finale du 100 m papillon qui a été le théâtre d'un record du monde, lundi, à Kazan, aux Championnats du monde FINA.

La Suédoise Sarah Sjöström a abaissé de 10 centièmes de seconde le record qu'elle avait établi la veille en demi-finale pour conquérir le titre mondial en un temps de 55,64 s. La Danoise Jeannette Ottesen (57,05 s) et la Chinoise Ying Lu (57,48 s) ont complété le podium.

« C'est tellement proche... je suis un petit peu déçue. J'aurais aimé nager plus vite, a commenté Savard. Cette fin de semaine, j'ai nagé trois fois dans les 57 secondes et c'est la première fois que ça m'arrive, alors c'est positif de ce côté. Mes temps sont beaucoup plus rapides qu'aux Jeux panaméricains. J'étais prête, confiante et je ne me suis pas laissée impressionner. »

Également finaliste, la Canadienne Noemie Thomas (58,22 s) a conclu en huitième place.

Troisième après une longueur de bassin, Savard se doutait bien qu'elle serait parmi les premières à ce moment de la course. C'est plutôt la fin de l'épreuve qui l'a laissée sur son appétit.

« C'est la façon dont je nage et je savais que je serais dans les premières à ce moment. J'ai pris ma dernière respiration un peu trop tard et c'est ce qui a gâché la fin de ma course. J'ai aussi fait des erreurs qui m'ont fait perdre quelques centièmes de seconde », a poursuivi l'athlète de Pont-Rouge qui a nagé à côté de Sjöström en finale et en demi-finale.

« C'est impressionnant de voir à quel point elle est supérieure aux autres! »

Savard sera de retour en course mardi matin dans le cadre des préliminaires du 200 m libre.

Plongeon – Championnats du monde FINA

Une belle remontée et une médaille d'argent pour Abel et Imbeau-Dulac

Montréal, 2 août 2015 (Sportcom) – Le duo formé de Jennifer Abel et François Imbeau-Dulac est monté sur la deuxième marche du podium, dimanche, au 3 m synchro mixte présenté dans le cadre des Championnats du monde de la FINA, à Kazan, en Russie.

Alors que c'est la première fois que les duos mixtes s'exécutent aux Mondiaux, les deux Québécois ont imité leurs coéquipiers Meaghan Benfeito et Vincent Riendeau, également médaillés d'argent en synchro mixte, mais à la tour de 10 mètres, au début des Championnats.

« C'est sûr que nous sommes vraiment satisfaits de notre deuxième place aujourd'hui (dimanche). Nos deux premiers plongeurs n'étaient vraiment pas aussi bons qu'à notre habitude, mais nous sommes contents de terminer nos Mondiaux en beauté, parce que tous les deux à l'individuel ça ne s'est pas passé comme nous le voulions. Nous avions une dernière chance de nous rattraper et c'est ce que nous avons fait, surtout avec nos deux derniers plongeurs qui nous ont sortis d'un départ très difficile », a indiqué Imbeau-Dulac.

Sixièmes après les quatre premiers plongeurs, Abel et Imbeau-Dulac ont profité de leur dernière présence sur le tremplin pour terminer en force, réalisant un double saut périlleux et demi avant avec deux vrilles pour obtenir la meilleure note de la cinquième ronde, ce qui leur a permis de totaliser 317,01 points et grimper de quatre échelons.

« D'habitude, nous sommes dans les alentours de 100 points dans nos bases, donc dans nos deux premiers plongeurs, et aujourd'hui nous n'avons fait que 91 points, notre pire résultat en six compétitions ensemble ! C'était vraiment une question de réparer les pots cassés et revenir en force avec nos plongeurs les plus forts, nos deux derniers », a expliqué le Québécois.

« Jennifer est l'une des seules plongeuses chez les femmes à exécuter notre dernier plongeon, donc il peut vraiment nous permettre d'amasser des points supplémentaires à cause du coefficient de difficulté. Nous faisons bien de le mettre à la fin, même si c'est très stressant, surtout qu'aujourd'hui nous savions que nous avions quelques points de retard. C'était important de le rentrer bien à la verticale et que la synchro soit parfaite. Ça a été, je pense, un de nos meilleurs plongeurs de l'année », a-t-il ajouté.

Les Chinois Han Wang et Hao Yang ont pris la tête dès le troisième plongeon et ont été les seuls à devancer les représentants du pays en amassant 339,90 points. Le podium a été complété par les Italiens Tania Cagnotto et Maicol Verzotto (315,30).

« Avant le dernier plongeon, je savais que nous ne devions pas le rater. J'étais stressée, j'avais peur, mais en même temps je savais que c'était le dernier plongeon de la saison alors je n'avais pas le choix de me donner à fond. C'est ce que j'ai fait et nous l'avons réussi. Je suis vraiment contente pour ça », a confié Abel.

La plongeuse de Laval a eu de la difficulté à aborder sa journée de compétition en synchro mixte positivement après sa déception de samedi à l'épreuve individuelle.

« Ça a été vraiment difficile de revenir en force, surtout après ma finale d'hier, mais François a été très bon avec moi. Il a été capable de me motiver et de sortir un peu de moi l'animal qui voulait la médaille. Je lui avais promis que nous allions faire une belle performance aujourd'hui et disons qu'après nos deux premiers plongeurs, j'avais un petit peu peur ! Par contre, je savais que nos trois derniers plongeurs étaient nos plus forts, alors je me suis dit gardons la tête haute », a dit Abel qui s'était classée sixième en finale du tremplin de 3 m samedi en raison d'une erreur dans son dernier plongeon.

Maintenant que les Mondiaux sont terminés, repos pour les plongeurs qui ont eu une saison bien remplie. « Cinq médailles pour Jen et moi cette saison, derrière les Chinois ! C'est une belle façon de finir l'année », a affirmé Imbeau-Dulac.

EXAMPLES OF RECENT MULTISPORT BULLETINS PRODUCED BY SPORTCOM

Hyperlink: <http://www.insquebec.org/multisport-vol-18-no-05/>

Online end product with link to other bulletin news in the right side menu:

Aucun commentaire

14 juillet 2015

UN BILLET EN OR POUR JACQUELINE SIMONEAU ET KARINE THOMAS

Jacqueline Simoneau

Après avoir dominé l'épreuve technique en duo jeudi, **Jacqueline Simoneau** et **Karine Thomas** ont à nouveau impressionné la foule et les juges, samedi, pour être couronnées championnes des Jeux panaméricains de Toronto et du même coup obtenir une place pour le pays en nage synchronisée aux Jeux olympiques de Rio. Elles ont ensuite réussi un doublé en remportant l'or avec leurs coéquipières à l'épreuve par équipe.

En présentant une routine impressionnante dans la piscine du Centre aquatique panaméricain, Thomas, de Gatineau, et Simoneau, de Montréal, ont obtenu 90,000 points pour leur programme libre et ont ainsi terminé la compétition avec un total de 178,0881 points.

Leur pointage leur a permis de devancer les Mexicaines Karem Achach et Nuria Diosdado (170,7800) et les Américaines Mariya Koroleva et Alison Williams (166,3876).

Lorsque le résultat s'est confirmé et qu'elles ont appris leur qualification olympique, la jeune Jacqueline Simoneau a fondu en larmes. Toute la pression venait de tomber. « C'est un rêve que j'ai depuis l'âge de 5 ou 6 ans », a raconté l'athlète de 18 ans à travers les larmes. Le trop-plein d'émotions sort quand je pense aux Jeux olympiques. Ça me prouve que tout le travail et l'ardeur que j'ai mis dans mon sport en valent vraiment la peine. Je suis tellement contente que je n'ai pas de mot pour décrire comment je me sens. »

Une équipe inspirée

Après la victoire du duo en matinée, les nageuses de l'équipe canadienne ne pouvaient qu'être inspirées de la performance offerte par leurs deux coéquipières. **Gabriella Brisson, Annabelle Frappier, Claudia Holzner, Lisa Mikelberg et Marie-Lou Morin**

Liens rapides

- Plongeon – Six médailles pour le FAB IV
- Paranotation – Aurélie Rivard championne du monde
- Canoë-kayak – Fournel paie vers l'or
- Vélo de montagne – « Ça passait ou ça cassait » -Raphael Gagné
- Rugby – Balade dans le parc panaméricain pour Paquin et Harvey
- Gymnastique artistique – Victoria Woo et l'équipe nationale vice-championnes
- Judo – Les judokas québécois raflent quatre médailles
- Haltérophilie – Francis Luna-Grenier, fin stratège
- Squash – À nouveau le bronze pour Shawn Delierre
- Aviron – Pascal Lussier sur la troisième marche
- Cyclisme sur route – Canuel termine le Giro au 11^e rang, Numainville abandonne
- Para-athlétisme – Alexandre Dupont sixième à Lausanne
- Volleyball – Le parcours des Canadiennes au Grand Prix mondial s'arrête
- Tennis en fauteuil roulant – Éric Gilbert demi-finaliste au Michigan
- Brèves des Jeux panaméricains
- Bourse de doctorat en physiologie du sport et de la performance

RECEVEZ GRATUITEMENT EN CONFÉRENCE UN ATHLÈTE DE NIVEAU INTERNATIONAL

JOUEZ GAGNANT

Faire une demande

Hyperlink: <http://www.insquebec.org/multisport-vol-18-no-08/>

Online end product with link weekly calendar and athletes to watch in the right side menu:

CLERMONT DEUX FOIS QUATRIÈME AUX MONDIAUX



Photo Hélène Grenier
Nicole Clermont

En terminant deux fois quatrième, **Nicole Clermont** a été la Québécoise qui s'est rapprochée le plus près du podium la semaine dernière, aux Championnats du monde de paracyclisme qui étaient disputés à Nottwil, en Suisse.

L'athlète de Saint-Denis-de-Brompton, qui évolue en classe C5, a fini au pied du podium tant au contre-la-montre qu'à la course en ligne.

« Le parcours était très difficile et je suis contente de ma course. J'ai tout donné et je quitte ces Championnats du monde la tête haute. J'ai encore du travail à faire pour accéder au podium et je suis prête à faire les efforts nécessaires », a dit la Québécoise après la course en ligne.

Chez les C4, **Marie-Claude Molnar** a fini cinquième du contre-la-montre avant de poser le pied à la course sur route en raison d'une chute. « Plus de peur que de mal, a indiqué l'athlète de Greenfield Park. J'ai un doigt disloqué et cassé. Mon vélo a aussi subi des dommages mineurs, mais c'est réparable. Je vais me reprendre! »

En tandem, la Montréalaise **Audrey Lemieux** était la pilote de l'Ontarienne Robbi Weldon. Seules porte-couleurs du Canada à cette épreuve, elles ont pris le huitième rang au contre-la-montre et le neuvième à la course en ligne.

Une erreur qui coûte cher à Charles Moreau

Chez les hommes, les meilleures performances canadiennes appartiennent au spécialiste du vélo à mains **Charles Moreau**, qui a pris le septième rang à la course sur route et le huitième rang du contre-la-montre chez les H3.

« Je suis bien satisfait d'avoir terminé septième à la course sur route malgré des problèmes de freins. C'est quand même décevant et frustrant que cet élément hors de mon contrôle m'ait coûté une présence parmi le groupe de tête. »

Dans la course pour une médaille au contre-la-montre vendredi, Moreau s'est trompé de parcours, ce qui lui a fait perdre du temps précieux. « Après analyse, ça quand même été une bonne course quant à la gestion de l'effort et aux données de course, mais je me suis trompé à trois occasions sur le parcours. Ça ne m'est jamais arrivé en

À surveiller

24-9 Multisport – Championnats du monde de la FINA, Kazan, Russie

À surveiller :

Natation: **Alyson Ackman, Jade Dusablon, Audrey Lacroix, Sandrine Mainville, Victoria Poon et Katerine Savard;**

Water-polo: Femmes : **Krystina Alogbo, Joëlle Békhazi, Shae Fournier, Katrina Monton, Dominique Perreault, Christine Robinson et Stephanie Valin;** Hommes: **Dusan Aleksic, Justin Boyd, Nicolas Constantin-Bicari, David Lapins et George Torakis.**

3-9 Cyclisme sur route – Tour de l'Utah (2.HC), plusieurs villes, Utah

À surveiller : **Alizé Brien et Pierrick Nault**

7-14 Multisport – Jeux parapanaméricains, Toronto, Ontario

À surveiller : plusieurs Québécois

8-9 Triathlon – Coupe du monde, Tiszaújváros, Hongrie

À surveiller : **Jérémy Briand, Xavier Grenier-Talavera, Emy Leagault, Alexis Lepage**

8-9 Vélo de montagne – Coupe du monde, Windham, New York

À surveiller : plusieurs Québécois dont **Raphaël Gagné**

9-16 Basketball – Championnat des Amériques de la FIBA (femmes), Edmonton, Alberta



À surveiller : **Nirra Fields et Lizanne Murphy**

10-16 Badminton – Championnats du monde, Jakarta, Indonésie

À surveiller : **Philippe Charron**



EXAMPLE OF RECENT SPORTCOM ARTICLE WRITTEN ON BEHALF OF A NATIONAL SPORT ORGANIZATION



Pour diffusion immédiate

Judo Canada

Catherine Beauchemin-Pinard médaillée de bronze en Russie

Montréal, 18 juillet 2015 – Quelques jours à peine après sa médaille d'argent obtenue aux Jeux panaméricains, **Catherine Beauchemin-Pinard** est montée sur la troisième marche du podium au Grand Chelem de judo de Tyumen, samedi, en Russie.

Dans sa finale pour une des deux médailles de bronze à l'enjeu, l'athlète de Saint-Hubert a vaincu l'Italienne Giulia Quintavalle par ippon à la suite d'une immobilisation au sol.

« C'est une belle médaille qui me procure de précieux points pour le processus de qualification olympique. J'étais forte dans mes prises et j'ai remporté mes trois combats au sol. Ce résultat vient confirmer le travail que j'ai fait afin d'être plus constante dans mes compétitions », a déclaré celle qui sent être sur une lancée son podium des Jeux panaméricains.

La seule défaite de Beauchemin-Pinard est survenue en demi-finale, alors qu'elle a perdu en prolongation contre la Japonaise Tsukasa Yoshida qui s'imposera plus tard en finale contre la Roumaine Corina Caprioriu.

À ses deux premiers combats du jour, la Québécoise avait signé deux victoires par ippon contre la Sénégalaise Hortance Diedhiou et l'Israélienne Camila Minakawa.

« Catherine a eu de bons résultats au cours des deux dernières semaines. Cela la mettra en confiance pour les Championnats du monde qui auront lieu le mois prochain », a déclaré l'entraîneur **Sasha Mehmedovic**.

Chez les hommes, **Arthur Margelidon** (-73 kg) est passé bien près d'être lui aussi décoré du bronze. Après des victoires contre l'Ouzbek Sharofiddin Boltaboev et le Ghanéen Emmanuel Nartey, le Montréalais s'est avoué vaincu face au Russe Musa Mogushkov.

Ensuite, sa victoire au repêchage contre le Mongol Nyam-Ochir Sainjargal lui a permis de combattre pour le bronze contre l'Allemand Igor Wandtke. Dans cet affrontement, Margelidon a reçu deux pénalités, ce qui a fait pencher la balance en faveur de l'Allemand.

Hyperlink on Judo Canada Website: <http://www.judocanada.org/fr/2015/07/18/catherine-beauchemin-pinard-medaille-de-bronze-en-russie/>

MOST POPULAR ATHLETES ON TWITTER

Here's a top 20 of the most popular Canadian Olympic athletes (minus NHL professional players) on Twitter, with their number of followers.

1. Steve Nash (basketball) 2.33 million – retired athlete
2. Milos Raonic (tennis) 228 k
3. Mark McMorris (slopestyle) 161 k
4. Donovan Bailey (athletics) 100 k – retired athlete
5. Christine Sinclair (soccer) 82 k
6. Joanie Rochette (figure skating) 72.4 k
7. Patrick Chan (figure skating) 66.2 k
8. Cassie Campbell (ice hockey) 49.8 k – retired athlete
9. Hayley Wickenheiser (ice hockey) 44.4 k
10. Vasek Pospisil (tennis) 39.8 k
11. Alexandre Despatie (diving) 35.2 k – retired athlete
12. Clara Hugues (speed skating, cycling) 33.6 k – retired athlete
13. Simon Whitfield (triathlon) 32.7 k – retired athlete
14. Alexandre Bilodeau (freestyle skiing) 32.6 k – retired athlete
15. Bruny Surin (athletics) 31.8 k – retired athlete
16. Jeffrey Buttle (figure skating) 30.6 k – retired athlete
17. Shannon Szabados (ice hockey) 25.3 k
18. Kurt Browning (figure skating) 25.3 k – retired athlete
19. 3 Dufour-Lapointe Sisters (freestyle skiing) 25.1 k
20. Kaetlyn Osmond (figure skating) 24.5 k

Special mention to Eugenie Bouchard (tennis), who has 493 k followers on Twitter. Eugenie, though she is in good position to qualify for Rio 2016 due to her WTA ranking, has never participated in the Olympic Games.


In comparison, here's a top 20 of the most popular professional athletes on Twitter, with their number of followers.

1. Ronaldo (football) 37.3 million
2. Kaka (football) 23.4 million
3. LeBron James (basketball) 23 million
4. Neymar (football) 19.4 million
5. Wayne Rooney (football) 11.7 million
6. Kevin Durant (basketball) 11.5 million
7. Iniesta (football) 11.3 million
8. Shaquille O'Neal (basketball) 10.3 million
9. Dwayne Johnson "The Rock" (wrestling) 9.12 million
10. Rafael Nadal (tennis) 8.33 million
11. Cesc Fabregas (football) 7.94 million
12. Gareth Bale (football) 7.16 million
13. Kobe Bryant (basketball) 7.13 million
14. Floyd Mayweather (boxing) 6.36 million
15. Serena Williams (tennis) 4.99 million
16. Dwyane Wade (basketball) 4.86 million
17. Tiger Woods (golf) 4.69 million
18. Novak Djokovic (tennis) 4.52 million
19. Lamar Odom (basketball) 4.32 million
20. Tony Hawk (skateboard) 4.11 million


ATHLETES' INFLUENCE IN MEDIA


LE MAG


HOME | BUSINESS | MAILLOTS ET ÉQUIPEMENTS | CULTURE | HIGH TECH | FORME ET LOISIRS



CRISTIANO RONALDO EST LE SPORTIF LE PLUS MÉDIATISÉ DU MONDE

 Share

 Tweet

 Share

Football, Tendances | 6 octobre 2014 - 10:25


Cristiano Ronaldo champion du monde des médias. Selon une étude du cabinet Cision, le Portugais est le sportif qui a généré le plus d'articles sur Internet depuis le début de l'année 2014. En tout, 741 969 sujets ont été consacrés au Ballon d'Or en titre !

Comme d'habitude, Lionel Messi n'est jamais très loin lorsqu'on parle de CR7. La Puiga arrive en deuxième position du classement avec 599 115 articles générés. Les deux stars sont les deux seuls footballeurs d'un Top 10 où l'on retrouve LeBron James (462 825) sur la troisième marche du podium.

Les coaches ne font pas partie du classement, mais José Mourinho reste un grand agitateur médiatique. L'entraîneur de Chelsea a généré 423 447 articles en ligne depuis le début de l'année ! Un total qui va sûrement être encore boosté pour son accrochage avec Arsène Wenger.

Le Top 10

1. Cristiano Ronaldo (football) 741 969
2. Lionel Messi (football) 599 115
3. LeBron James (basket) 462 825
4. Roger Federer (tennis) 421 411
5. Rafael Nadal (tennis) 375 482
6. Tiger Woods (golf) 343 609
7. Phil Mickelson (golf) 203 846
8. Kobe Bryant (basket) 121 979
9. Floyd Mayweather (boxe) 110 228
10. Matt Ryan (football américain) 33 104



Tweets

Source: <http://lemag.eurosport.fr/football/cristiano-ronaldo-est-le-sportif-le-plus-mediatise-du-monde-8031/>

Cristiano Ronaldo, le sportif aux 100 millions de fans

Source : <http://www.sportsmarketing.fr/cristiano-ronaldo-100-millions-fans/>

Cristiano Ronaldo est le premier sportif à dépasser la barre des 100 millions de fans sur Facebook. Il est le premier homme, athlète et footballeur à réussir cela, devenant tout simple une légende de son temps.

Pour vous donner un ordre d'idée de son influence, si la page de Cristiano Ronaldo était un pays, il serait le 13ème pays au monde devant les Philippines et derrière le Mexique.

Son post le plus populaire est une photo de lui et son fils qui a été **liké plus de 3,4 millions de fois** et la photo qu'il a publiée où il tient le ballon d'or a été **partagée plus de 238 000 fois**. Avec 78 % d'hommes sur sa page, Cristiano est une superstar auprès des fans de foot, notamment en Indonésie, au Brésil et en Inde.

Repucom, qui a désigné CR7, comme l'**athlète le plus « bankable » du monde** estime que le footballeur gagne environ 1 fan par seconde (54 fans par minute). Son **taux de notoriété est très élevé, puisque plus de 4 personnes 5 (84%) dans le monde affirme connaître Cristiano Ronaldo**. Facebook n'est pas le seul réseau social où Cristiano Ronaldo s'impose comme leader, sur Twitter, il est également le sportif n°1 avec plus de 30 millions de followers.

Grâce à ces réseaux sociaux, qui sont devenus de réels médias, Cristiano Ronaldo touche une très large communauté à chaque fois qu'il s'exprime et ainsi ce sont des millions de personnes qui sont atteintes. Le lien entre l'importance de sa communauté et le fait que CR7 soit le plus « bankable » est vite fait. **Pour les marques, c'est une opportunité de communication importante**, tournée vers le social et le digital.

Avoir Cristiano Ronaldo comme ambassadeur permet aux marques de ne pas forcément investir dans un média de masse comme la télévision comme l'explique Pierre-Emmanuel Davin, Directeur de Repucom France : *« Par exemple, la récente campagne #DontCrackUnderPressure de TAG Heuer, relayée par Cristiano Ronaldo à travers 6 posts, a atteint en deux jours 34,92 millions de vues sur Facebook et 2,4 millions de mentions "J'aime", selon les estimations de nos experts Digital. Ces interactions ont ainsi généré une valorisation estimée à 300 000 € pour la marque TAG Heuer »*. On peut dire que Cristiano Ronaldo est presque un média vivant pour ses partenaires.

L'autre exemple est son équipementier Nike Football qui sait parfaitement jouer de l'influence et de l'audience de Cristiano Ronaldo pour véhiculer ses messages, que ce soit lors de la campagne Risk Everything où il fut l'un des acteurs majeurs, notamment dans le film Men In The Arena ou encore pour la finale du tournoi Nike Chance où le natif de Madère a souhaité bonne chance à l'un des portugais participant à la finale.

Le réseau social en a profité pour créer une **infographie** sur le sujet et compare le nombre de fans du footballeur portugais à des données parfois hallucinantes.

A noter que Cristiano Ronaldo, de par son influence et son audience, est plus qu'un joueur et devient un businessman avec des contrats publicitaires juteux mais surtout il devient un réseau social à lui-même, puisque le joueur a décidé récemment de lancer son application mobile/réseau social, **Viva Ronaldo** et un jeu, **The Game By Ronaldo**. En faisant cela, **Cristiano Ronaldo s'assure de fidéliser son public**, tout en maîtrisant à 100% les messages émis, ce qui est tout particulièrement important quand on sait que le joueur a lancé récemment sa propre marque de sous-vêtements, CR7 Underwear.

Sportsmen and Twitter: how they influence their communities

Source: <http://digitalsport.co/sportsmen-and-twitter-how-they-influence-their-communities>

The introduction of Social Media has been a common problem. A major problem. Reoccurring themes of battles between the individual and the organisation has proved hostile and ineffective. Sport is an industry where corporate communications is underdeveloped, and with so many instances being reported with sportsmen's use of twitter, it needs better regulation in place.

This research looked into sportsmen's use of Twitter and how they influence their community, and from there, what is the impact on the organization they represent.

In all, eleven sportsmen were used as the sample: from football, Rio Ferdinand, Michael Owen, Wayne Rooney and Joey Barton; from Formula One racing, Lewis Hamilton and Jenson Button; from cricket, Kevin Pietersen, Graeme Swann and Stuart Broad; and from rugby, Brian O'Driscoll and James Haskell.

To take further understanding from the implication of these tweets, a formula was devised to see the potential impact and influence of each individual Tweet. Each of the mentioned case studies were reviewed by their social media output between July 1st and August 7th.

To determine the impact of each individual tweet and to work out whether a tweet is "positive" or "negative" for corporate reputation, deep content analysis and a formula were devised. Current social media measuring platforms like Klout and Kred measure overall 'influence' and 'interaction', this formula wanted to target each individual to see how impactful it was on its followers and then each tweet was put into one of three categories: positive, neutral and negative (Tweeters, Twits & Twats).

**100 / (Followers/(Re-tweets + Favourited))
= Percentage of impact on corporate reputation**

Applying this formula to each tweet determined the impact on its followers and whether that post was influential and circulated – the higher the percentage, higher the impact. This formula was created as it can target all sports personalities and the important thing to notice is that it is targeting influence and not popularity.

To build business objectives, a sense of measurement needs to be established. By using this formula of followers divided by the number of re-tweets and favourited each individual posts gets, the corporate communicator can immediately identify whether the post has been influential

in the sportsperson's community therefore ranking the sportsperson highly in their social media guidelines.

Footballers tend to have more followers than other sportspeople but that is not saying that because of a smaller following, their impact on corporate reputation would not be as significant. The image below shows that a formula was needed to provide critical exploration that detailed content analysis did not provide. The formula gives extra depth that was needed to discover which of the sportspeople analysed were influential. The percentages in Figure 1 show what percentages of Tweets were positive or negative for corporate reputation and by using the formula, this dissertation could actually explore the impact.

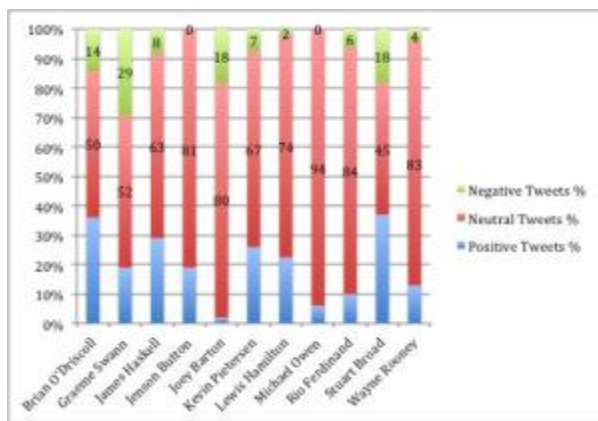


Figure 1: The chart shows the percentage of tweets splitting into negative, neutral and positive impacts on corporate reputation

Figure 2 below shows clear indication which sportspeople have a considerable impact on corporate reputation. From the sportspeople analysed, cricketer Graeme Swann and racing driver Lewis Hamilton appear to have a larger influence percentage affecting corporate reputation.

The overall average of the sportspeople mentioned shows a greater impact on their audience. A closer examination of certain tweets reaching bigger percentages showed that Lewis Hamilton was talking about 'contract break downs' with his employer, McLaren and Graeme Swann's impact is similar to that of 'neutral' state. He purely uses Twitter for 'banter' purposes, even though, sometimes, it is at the expense of his teammates.

Banter is a concept that is common in sport, and especially sport teams. It helps build team spirit and creates a good atmosphere, however those who are outside of the 'banter' can see it as insensitive and careless and as social media is public, these posts can be easily taken out of

context. Corporate communicators need to target this to guarantee social media is being used appropriately and to fulfill its potential.

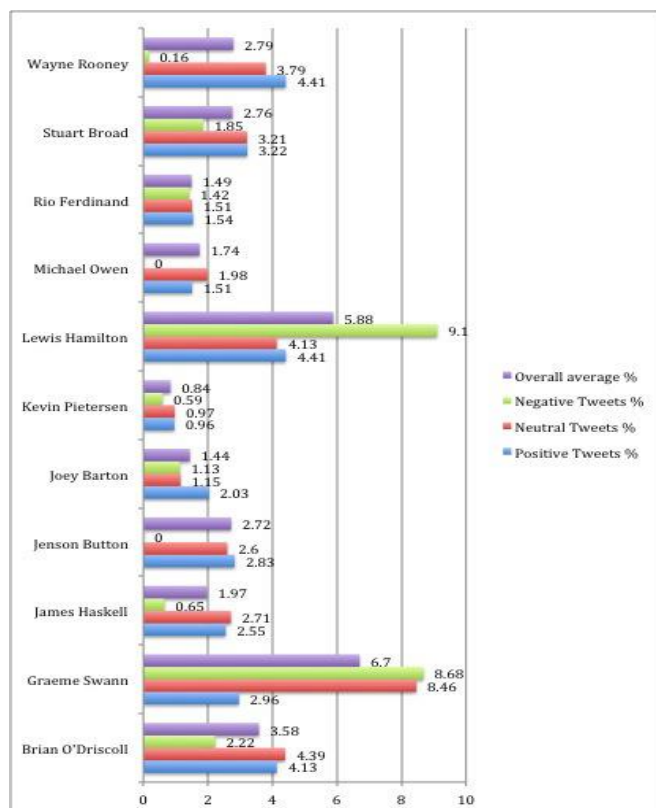


Figure 2: Using the 'Influence' Formula, the chart shows the influence from each individual from a corporate reputation point of view

Regardless of the 'banter' tweets, it proves that Hamilton and Swann are highly influential when it comes to using social media. Hamilton's negative influence came from only two tweets, showing that the public and media examine every post carefully. Therefore, it is essential that a social media policy is put into place to stop tweets like this – even though they can be rare in number, their impact can be disproportionately negative because they reach such a large audience that is only amplified through re-tweets.

The most overriding conclusion extracted from the findings is the response each of the sports gets. Football, as expected, attracts large volumes of followers and that is reflected in re-tweets and replies they get from each tweet. Every post is analysed and used to either make a story or to engage supporters and football fans. The comments are not always positive, and some of them are simply abuse. However, there is some clear indication that certain posts received more abuse than others. This is why corporate communicators need to manage this process and provide guidelines to ensure the best possible messages are given out.

The content analysis provides greater understanding of how sportspeople use social media networks like Twitter. James Haskell, for instance, uses it more to ‘banter’ other rugby players, whereas Rio Ferdinand uses it to endorse his external business ventures. The use is wide spreading, but what is clear from this content analysis, all of them are using it personally and not through agencies. This leaves each individual open to abuse and possible news stories.

Referring back to the three typologies – Tweeters, Twits and Twats – the use of content analysis can categorise these players. The ‘Tweeters’, taken from the content analysis are Jenson Button, Wayne Rooney and Michael Owen who score highly on positive effects on corporate reputation.

The ‘Twits’ are James Haskell, Stuart Broad, Kevin Pietersen, Joey Barton and Rio Ferdinand who have considerable influence but are not using it to its full potential.

They use twitter to ‘banter’ and that can have a bad impact on corporate reputation. The inclusion of controversial tweeters such as Rio Ferdinand and Kevin Pietersen in the twit category shows just how difficult it is to maintain neutrality. Both could be seen to have fallen into bad habits, it is important to show that some of the social media posts can easily fall into the ‘twat’ category, but these sportspeople use Twitter for positive means as well.

The ‘Twats’ are Graeme Swann and Lewis Hamilton, as it appears they have a lot of influence and as soon as they post something negative against corporate reputation, it becomes extremely popular with their followers. Nullifying these types of tweets would actually put both sportspersons into the ‘Tweeter’ category because they do have considerable impact on their community.

Conclusion

The biggest conclusion to take from this content analysis is that **70% of the 1098 tweets analysed were ‘neutral’**. The sportspeople were either stating an opinion or promoting external business ventures. Corporate communicators are missing an opportunity here. With the wealth of influence the sportspeople have on their communities, **more should done to promote corporate reputation and for the “talent” to actively promote their club and build corporate reputation**. A social media policy outlining guidelines to encourage this could be of great benefit to the individual, stakeholders and, most importantly, the organisation.

Social Media: Sport's Biggest Enemy

Source: <http://weplay.co/social-media-sports-biggest-enemy/>

Social media has become the number one activity for internet users. Of all the user groups sports fans are some of the most engaged, with 70% of those following a sports brand now likely to engage with and share that brand's content. Clearly sport and social media go hand in hand in bringing the experience of sport closer to the fan however this relationship is routinely volatile. As recent events have reminded us, bouts between athletes and users are not uncommon, so how much damage is social doing to sport.

The FA recently caused a stir by handing out a three match suspension to Rio Ferdinand following an offensive tweet he posted back in September. Many have argued that irrespective of the power and influence social media now has, neither the player nor his club should be punished in a way that affects them on the field for an incident that happened off it. He has since decided not to appeal the ban.

The conflicting arguments in the question of whether sportsmen and sports clubs have a responsibility as role models off the pitch are long standing ones, and the advent of social media has made the debate more relevant than ever. With the essentialness that brand image and perception have taken on board, lapses in professionalism on social platforms can have a massive detrimental effect affecting both revenues and careers.



This hasn't been the only incident where a professional athlete has made a mistake with it then being amplified through social media. NFL's star Ray Rice was arrested for a domestic abuse incident with his fiancé in a casino lift. However after this footage was leaked it went viral over the social media platforms of YouTube and Vine which had a profound backlash on the Baltimore Ravens and their player Ray Rice. Based on the social media attention this gained in the media and the way the Baltimore Ravens handled the incident via live Tweeting the incident, the NFL team retracted and deleted the Tweet. The Ravens subsequently had to apologise and were forced into terminating Ray Rice's contract, which they notified their followers of via Twitter.



This incident not only gained global media attention with ESPN focusing a entire proportion of the show talking about the issue, but people took to social media to voice their opinions on the matter. Ray Rice and the Baltimore Ravens received over 1.9 million Twitter mentions regarding the domestic abuse incident. This also sent a message to many sports clubs, athletes and brands on how not to deal with a PR issue of that scale over social media.

On the other hand it is vital to appreciate the important relationship sports, athletes and brands now have within social media landscape. Social media platforms such as Twitter, Instagram and Vine are only going to help sporting mega events improve their fan engagement and increase their global reach.



Some sports teams are slowly trying to adapt and harness the power of social media to reach their target audiences, but with an increasing amount of new social media platforms being released nearly weekly, it can be challenging for some sports to utilise these platforms. Sports teams are now having to become more creative in the way they use different social media networks to stay relevant, engage with their followers and maximise their ROI. Claire Williams deputy team principal of Williams motor racing team has underlined the fact that F1 need to improve their social media strategy to maximise true fan engagement and build a strong relationship between the fans and the brands.

“Lack of digital and social coverage will continue to negatively impact on the popularity of motor racing when compared to other sports”

The likes of Southampton Football Club have made sure they are one step ahead of the game, by effectively using and maximising a variety of social media platforms to increase their brand awareness, provide exclusive access and insight for fans and provide that engagement bridge between the club, the fans and the players. Southampton Football Club have created an extremely engaging social media strategy which provides different content on the wide variety of platforms it uses.

Social media is also becoming more and more important for certain sports to reach certain demographics within their target audiences. Major League Baseball have recently experienced poor television viewing figures during the recent 2014 World Series, but as a result have looked for innovate ways to use social media to target a younger fan base, as the average baseball fan is middle aged, white and male. The San Francisco Giants created a social media cafe within their ball park which promises to give fans a new social media experience by giving them and the club an overview of what content is being uploaded. As a result this can then be shared on the San Francisco Giants different social media platforms.

In conclusion social media has helped fans communicate with the team they support and players they idolise at a personal level. It also has the power to boost sport clubs and athletes brand image but if handled in the wrong way can seriously damage their reputation. Social media has changed the public relations game but only those teams who can adapt and maximise their social media strategy will be able to reap the rewards.

Athletes and Social Media: Untapped Goldmine or PR Landmine?

Source: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/ben-pickering/athletes-and-social-media_b_3082184.html

Future NBA Hall of Famer Kobe Bryant recently suffered a torn Achilles and shortly afterward shared his frustration with millions of fans on his Facebook page. In less than 48 hours Kobe's post received more than 400,000 Likes. Many in the media used the term "rant" to describe Kobe's post, but rather than focusing on any negative connotation associated with the term rant (yes, he was understandably devastated by the season-ending injury) the post is a perfect example of how social media can serve as a platform for authentic communication between a superstar athlete and his or her fans.

As social media has exploded over the past few years it has introduced new opportunities, along with its share of challenges, with respect to how we communicate. The implications, both positive and negative, are amplified when it comes to celebrities on social media. As a die-hard sports fan I have watched with interest to see how professional athletes in particular are using social utilities such as Facebook and Twitter.

Most of us have heard horror stories about people (from all walks of life) sharing questionable or clearly inappropriate content through social channels. Not surprisingly there are numerous examples of this happening with athletes. One such example is former University of North Carolina football player Marvin Austin, whose tweeting supposedly triggered a University investigation that led to his dismissal from the football team and sanctions on the program.

On the flip side there are athletes who are using social media to engage with fans in a positive manner. Shaquille O'Neal has almost 7 million followers on his @Shaq Twitter account, where he expresses his larger than life personality and will occasionally tweet clues to his whereabouts for impromptu meet-ups with fans. Another example is Vancouver Canucks goalie Roberto Luongo, whose @strombone1 Twitter persona helped endear the goalie to fans following a disappointing playoff loss and rampant trade rumors.

Most professional sports leagues have instituted social media policies that prohibit athletes from posting or tweeting during games and for anywhere from 30 minutes to 2 hours before and after. Otherwise players are generally free to use social media as they see fit. At the college level some coaches, including Steve Spurrier, head football coach at South Carolina have banned players from using Twitter altogether.

I think this approach misses the point. Today many young athletes are already active on social media by the time they enter college. Prohibiting them from using social media cuts off one of their primary conduits for communication. It also delays the need for these young adults to assume accountability for what they say. Student-athletes should be taught how to use social media responsibly, in the same way they are prepared to deal with traditional media.

At the collegiate level the use of social media can allow athletes to share a bit more of themselves with friends and fans, while teaching them to behave responsibly and act as an ambassador for their university. With social media savvy becoming an increasingly important job skill, this will help provide student-athletes with a leg up as they enter the workforce. And for the lucky few that become professional athletes it can be an extremely valuable asset as well.

In the same way that many companies have utilized social media to engage with consumers and develop greater brand awareness, so too can individuals who might not otherwise have the ability to reach a mass audience. Yet it seems many professional athletes have yet to capitalize on social media to its full extent to build their personal brand.

Some of the larger artist management firms and sports marketing agencies have begun to embrace a more social strategy for their clients. However, many athletes are not currently receiving social media support from either their agents or teams. This not only exposes the athlete and organization to potential PR backlash, but is also a missed opportunity to utilize the medium to increase the value of sponsorship and endorsements or to promote a personal cause.

In a recent Wall Street Journal [article](#), David Carter, head of the USC Sports Business Institute was quoted saying, "As celebrity endorsements move beyond the superstars, the mid-level player with personality and social-media savvy can reach endorsement and name-recognition levels that were once only the domain of the best of the best."

The WSJ article cites former Yankee and current member of the Cleveland Indians, Nick Swisher, as a prime example of an athlete using social media to maximum effect. As a result of his social media presence he was asked by Mercedes to participate in the car manufacturer's Super Bowl campaign. He enlisted the support of his Twitter followers and in the process helped to not only raise his profile but also money for his charity.

Catalyst Public Relations conducted a [study](#) that explored the attitudes and habits of NFL, NBA, MLB and college football and basketball fans on social media. Of primary interest to marketers is the finding that sports **fans that follow their favorite athletes on social media are 55% more likely to purchase a brand if an athlete mentions it on Facebook or Twitter.**

The Catalyst data and the story of Nick Swisher should inspire professional athletes and their business managers to embrace social media if they haven't already. Just as those companies who were early adopters of social media have been able to carve a social identity and increase brand

equity, there is a window of opportunity for athletes to set themselves apart and make the most of social media.

I'm sure we will continue to hear stories about social media faux pas among athletes, but I believe that in the coming years we will hear a lot more examples of how social media is being used to improve the image of professional sports, humanize the heroes we place on pedestals, and build more genuine and authentic relationships amongst athletes and fan communities. As a fan, that is something I look forward to. And as a marketer it is something I see tremendous opportunity in.