

# The Impact of Social Media on Sports Consumer Behavior Analysis

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**Abstract:** The purpose of this study is to investigate the effects of different sports-related content on social media on consumers' sports consumption behaviors, including sports product purchases and sports activity participation. Through questionnaire surveys and linear regression analysis, the study found that specific content types can effectively enhance public participation in sports activities and desire to purchase sports products. The findings suggest that virtual interactions on social media influence consumers' sports consumption behavior in an all-encompassing way through a variety of mechanisms such as role model demonstration, self-efficacy enhancement, social identity establishment, immersive experience stimulation, and purchase decision influence. This study provides precise social media marketing strategy suggestions for sports brands and theoretical support for promoting sports policies for all.

**Keywords:** Social Media; Sports Consumption; Product Purchase; Engagement.

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## 1. Introduction

The sports industry, as an important part of the global economy, has shown strong growth in recent years and has become increasingly important. According to statistics, the size of the global sports market has continued to grow over the past few years.

Since the 21st century, social media has become an indispensable part of people's daily life, with an expanding user base, wide coverage and increasing influence. It has not only changed the way people access information and interact socially, but also provided new communication channels and market space for various industries. Among them, the younger generation, especially Millennials and Generation Z consumers, have grown up living in an Internet environment and have a natural affinity and dependence on content and digital services on social media, further driving the shift of sports consumption to digital platforms[1].

The popularization of social media has brought new development opportunities for the sports industry. Through social media platforms, sports brands can interact directly with their target consumers and understand their needs and feedback so as to better adjust their marketing strategies. At the same time, social media can also increase brand exposure and awareness, creating more business opportunities for sports brands[2]. Similarly, During the period of "14th Five-Year Plan", from the state to the local sports industry has paid more attention to the sports industry and policy support than ever before, which has laid a solid foundation for the high-speed development of the sports industry and accelerated the development of the sports industry into a pillar industry of the national economy[3]. Social media can also help promote sports for all and accelerate the development of the entire sports industry.

This study will extend and deepen the existing theories of sports marketing and provide new research perspectives and evidence by quantitatively analyzing the impact of different kinds of sports content on sports consumption behavior on social media, helping to understand how to more effectively use social media platforms for brand marketing and sports

promotion in the context of the digital era.

## 2. Literature Review

Some studies have shown that in terms of social media dissemination of sports events, high-level events are the main motivation for determining media sports consumption, and social structural factors have a greater impact on media sports consumption behavior than individual factors. Therefore, it is necessary to focus on the supply of digital media and social media content, seek a wider user reach, develop social media promotion strategies for the different identity attributes of fans, enhance the stickiness of fans, expand the dissemination power of the event, increase the innovation efforts, improve the consumption experience of digital media, enhance the degree of user participation, pay attention to the social structural factors, make adaptive adjustments, and complete its own social integration, emotional catharsis and so on. The function of the event will be realized[2,4].

At the level of fan economy in the sports industry, social media provides a convenient platform for interaction between brands and fans, and fan interaction and community marketing have become important means of marketing sports goods. Sports brands can inspire fans to participate by organizing online activities such as lucky draws, contests and topic discussions. Community marketing, on the other hand, gathers fans with common interests and needs together to form a close-knit community. Brands can release exclusive product information, special offers, professional sports knowledge, etc. in the community to build deep trust and cooperation with fans. Athletes can share their training routines, competition moments, life moments, etc. through social media to show a real, three-dimensional personal image and attract the attention and support of fans. At the same time, athletes can also use social media for business cooperation and brand promotion, and realize mutual benefit and win-win situation by releasing relevant contents of sponsored brands[5].

Foreign scholars have conducted in-depth research into the impact of social media on sports marketing and consumer

behavior. Yahya Manna was the first to explore the impact of social media on the purchase of sports clothing, highlighting its potential as an ideal platform for brand promotion and its ability to significantly influence decision-making and enhance purchasing intent. His research on Puma and Adidas in Saudi Arabia revealed that social media marketing strategies are crucial for consumer choice, with factors such as age, gender, place of residence and educational level influencing brand preference [6].

Rizvandi A. et al. analyzed the motives (internal, such as supporting the team/achieving success, and external, such as promotions/excitement) and constraints of Iranian basketball and volleyball league audiences attending live matches [7]. As digital media develops, the way people consume sports is changing. Koronios Konstantinos et al. observed the new trend of sports consumers preferring to watch sports on media and studied the relationship between their motives, constraints and actual behavior [8]. Koronios and Andreas Papadopoulos systematically examined the influence of sports media consumption motives (e.g. team attachment, social needs) through a questionnaire survey [9]. Koronios et al. further used STATA to analyze and discover that past experiences, community/team attachment, fan needs (e.g. escaping stress, socializing, aesthetics) and media advertising positively influence future attendance intentions [10].

Technological progress has a profound impact. Younghan Lee and Dae Eun Kim innovatively studied how the technical interactivity of mobile devices and the social nature of media can influence the value co-creation behavior of sports consumers by enhancing collective efficacy (and collective intelligence) [11]. Sheryl V. I. De Araujo et al. (2024) focused on the role of sports influencers on social media in influencing consumer purchasing behavior, paying particular attention to the mechanism of consumer imitation. Their study of 305 respondents found that imitation behavior positively affects consumer well-being, but the credibility of influencers may have a negative impact on this [12].

To sum up, the existing studies mainly focus on the mechanisms of influence of social media on sports consumption behavior, the role of social media in sports event communication, the role of social media in fan interaction and community marketing, and the application of social media in sports marketing strategy. There is still a gap in the research of the impact of social media on sports consumption behavior in academia, and there is a lack of quantitative analysis of the impact of social media on sports consumption behavior.

### 3. Hypothesis

This study will apply knowledge from the fields of marketing, consumer behavior, and social psychology to respectively examine the impact of celebrity athlete game videos, celebrity athlete daily videos, sports brand apparel seeding, sports equipment reviews, sports tips and fitness tutorials, sports challenge activities, sports club account content, sports offers and promotions, personal sports experience sharing, sports-related community activities, celebrity endorsement of sports Brand advertising, sports charity events and charitable events, and sports virtual reality and augmented reality experiences are hypothesized to have an impact on the increase in sports product purchases and engagement.

When the total purchase score is used as the dependent variable, the daily videos of star athletes, the seeding of sports brand apparel, the evaluation of sports equipment and the

celebrity endorsement advertisements in social media have a significant positive influence on users' purchasing behavior. From the perspective of social identity theory, celebrity athletes' display of sports brand clothing through lifestyle videos can strengthen users' identification with the symbolic value of the brand and motivate consumers to achieve identity attribution through purchasing behavior. Sports equipment evaluation reduces consumers' decision-making risk through informational social influence, while grass-raising content triggers impulsive purchasing through the emotional path of the refined processing possibility model. Celebrity endorsement advertisements enhance brand trust through the source credibility model and inspire users to imitate consumer behavior.

When the total participation score was used as the dependent variable, celebrity athlete competition videos, sports skill tutorials, personal experience sharing, sports virtual reality (VR/AR) experience, equipment evaluation, and celebrity endorsement advertisements had a significant promotion effect on users' sports participation. According to social cognitive theory, competition videos enhance users' self-efficacy through observational learning, while skill tutorials enhance sport skill acquisition through the ability-motivation-opportunity model. Personal experience sharing triggers the narrative transmission effect, which lowers the psychological threshold of participation through emotional resonance, while VR/AR experience enhances the sense of presence and activates users' intrinsic motivation according to the technology acceptance model. Celebrity endorsement advertisements construct the social significance of sports participation through symbolic consumption theory, while equipment evaluation strengthens the feasibility of participation through the perception of functional value.

## 4. Empirical Studies and Results

### 4.1. Questionnaire Design and Data Collection

The questionnaire design was based on the categorization of sports content on social media. The social media sports content is categorized into six types based on the form of content presentation: Competitive Display, Life Interaction, Product Promotion and Marketing, Sports Instruction, Community Activities, and Technology Experience. The Competitive Display type focuses on sports competition itself, including athletes' performance and skills in competitions, such as videos of star athletes' matches. The Life Interaction type emphasizes athletes' daily lives and interactions with fans, including daily videos of star athletes, sports challenge activities, and personal sports experience sharing. The Product Promotion and Marketing type mainly involves the promotion and marketing of sports brands and equipment, including sports brand clothing recommendations, sports equipment reviews, star-endorsed sports brand advertisements, and sports promotions and sales activities. The Sports Instruction type provides education on sports techniques and fitness knowledge, including sports technique and fitness tutorials. The Community Activities type involves interactions and activities within sports communities, including content from sports clubs' accounts, sports-related community activities, and sports public welfare activities and charity events. The Technology Experience type involves new technologies in the sports field, such as virtual reality and augmented reality experiences.

Therefore, sports content on social media can be divided

into: videos of celebrity athletes competing in games, videos of celebrity athletes in their daily lives, sports brand apparel stocking, sports equipment reviews, sports tips and fitness tutorials, sports challenges, sports club account content, sports offers and promotions, personal sports experiences, sports-related community events, celebrity endorsement of sports brands, sports charity events and charitable events, sports virtual reality and augmented reality experiences, sports events, and sports activities. sports community activities, celebrity endorsed sports brand advertisements, sports charity events and charitable activities, and sports virtual reality and augmented reality experiences. These 13 categories of sports-related content constitute the independent variables of this study, i.e., factors influencing sports consumption behavior. The dependent variable, sports consumption behavior, was divided into two categories: sports brand product purchase and sports participation. The questionnaire was designed around these variables, with each independent variable corresponding to a Richter scale question to assess the extent to which different types of sports content influenced respondents' purchases and participation. In addition, the questionnaire collected basic information about the respondents, including gender, age, income, education, occupation and place of residence, as well as their participation in sports and the amount of money they spend

on sports annually.

In order to ensure that the respondents were attentive and conscientious in completing the questionnaire, a special attention test question was designed into the questionnaire. This question was designed to screen out those questionnaires that may not have read the questions carefully or answered them randomly, thus improving the quality and reliability of the data.

This study utilizes a convenience sampling method that aims to select a sample that is representative of a wide range of social media users. The sample included individuals of different genders, ages, income levels, educational backgrounds, and occupations. Recruiting participants through social media platforms and online sports communities allowed us to reach a diverse group of users, thus increasing the generalizability and applicability of the study.

At the end of data collection, we screened and cleaned the collected questionnaires. First, we excluded the questionnaires that failed the attention test questions to ensure the reliability of the data. Finally, we collected 314 valid questionnaires (352 is the number of questionnaires actually collected). The data of the distribution of the sample in terms of gender, age, income, education, occupation and residence is in the Table 1.

**Table 1.** Descriptive statistical analysis

sports event	options (as in computer software settings)	frequency	percentage
distinguishing between the sexes	male	163	51.9
	women	151	48.1
(a person's) age	18-24 years	83	26.4
	Under 18	32	10.2
	25-34 years	137	43.6
	35-44 years	46	14.6
	45 and over	16	5.1
education attainment	undergraduate (adjective)	119	37.9
	three-year college	119	37.9
	High school/secondary school and below	38	12.1
	Master's degree or above	38	12.1
	(grand) total	314	100.0
careers	office workers (as social group)	195	62.1
	retirement (from work)	1	0.3
	schoolchildren	72	22.9
	profession	23	7.3
	second-tier city	141	44.9
current address	Rural areas	44	14.0
	Third-tier cities and below	70	22.3
	first-line city	59	18.8
	(grand) total	314	100.0

## 4.2. Data Analysis and Results

This article conducted a linear regression analysis of the data to explore the relationship between the independent variable (i.e., a dummy variable for the 13 sport content types) and the dependent variable (i.e., the sum of the influence level scores). The results were obtained in the Table 2.

As indicated by the data in Table 2, when the total purchase

score was used as the dependent variable, the significance of celebrity athlete daily videos, sports brand apparel seeding, sports equipment reviews, and celebrity-endorsed sports brand advertisements was less than 0.05, and these significantly influenced consumers' purchases of sports products that appeared in the content.

**Table 2.** Linear regression analysis with purchase as the dependent variable

Coefficient <sup>a</sup>					
mould	Unstandardized coefficient		Standardized coefficient	t	significance
	B	standard error	Beta		
(Constant)	17.489	2.998		5.833	0.000
Star Athletes Competition Video	10.993	1.574	0.574	6.986	0.000
Celebrity Athletes Daily Video	0.903	1.485	0.048	0.608	0.544
Sports Brand Clothing Seeding	0.721	1.684	0.038	0.428	0.669
Sports Equipment Review	2.136	1.275	0.112	1.675	0.095
Exercise tips and fitness tutorials	4.791	0.988	0.244	4.848	0.000
Sports challenge activities	-2.291	1.664	-0.121	-1.377	0.170
Sports Club Account Content	-3.800	2.376	-0.106	-1.599	0.111
Sports offers and promotions	2.086	2.515	0.110	0.829	0.407
Sharing of personal sports experiences	4.563	1.008	0.212	4.527	0.000
Sports-related community activities	1.976	1.491	0.104	1.325	0.186
Celebrity endorsement of sports brand advertisements	1.846	0.942	0.094	1.959	0.051
Sporting events and charity events	4.491	2.436	0.236	1.843	0.066
Sports Virtual Reality and Augmented Reality Experiences	6.699	0.966	0.325	6.935	0.000

a. Dependent variable: Total participation

**Table 3.** Linear regression analysis with participation as the dependent variable [2]

Coefficient <sup>a</sup>					
mould	Unstandardized coefficient		Standardized coefficient	t	significance
	B	standard error	Beta		
(Constant)	17.489	2.998		5.833	0.000
Star Athletes Competition Video	10.993	1.574	0.574	6.986	0.000
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a. Dependent variable: Total participation

As indicated by the data in Table 3, when the total participation score is used as the dependent variable, the significance levels for star athlete competition videos, sports tips and fitness tutorials, personal sports experience sharing, and sports virtual reality and augmented reality experiences

are below 0.05, indicating that these content types have a significant positive impact on consumer participation in sports. The significance levels for sports equipment reviews and celebrity endorsed sports brand advertisements ranged from 0.05 to 0.1, suggesting that they have a more significant

impact on consumer participation in sports, albeit to a slightly lesser extent than the previous content types.

According to the analysis of the results, social media virtual interaction can influence consumers' physical practice behavior in an all-round way through various mechanisms, such as role model demonstration, self-efficacy enhancement, social identity establishment, immersive experience stimulation, and purchase decision influence. This influence process is complex and diversified, which not only reflects the development trend of the deep integration of science and technology and sports in modern society, but also provides new ideas and opportunities for the innovative development of the sports industry. In future research and practice, we should deeply explore and excavate the potential value of virtual interaction, and further optimize its positive influence on physical practice, so as to promote the vigorous development of sports and enhance the health of all people.

There is a close correlation between the emotional inclination of sports KOL content and consumer purchase decisions. This correlation is mainly reflected in emotional resonance, social identity, trust, influence and emotional marketing. For marketers, understanding this correlation can help them more effectively utilize KOLs for product promotion and brand building.

## **5. Application of Research Findings**

### **5.1. Precision Marketing Strategies for Sports Brands**

According to the results of the study, when the total purchase score is used as the dependent variable, the daily videos of celebrity athletes, the seeding of sports brand clothing, the evaluation of sports equipment, and the content of advertisements of celebrity-endorsed sports brands have a significant impact on consumers' purchase of sports brand products. Sports brands should post more of these four types of content when marketing in social media.

Sports brands can push consumers to shift from functional demand to identity expression demand by constructing symbolic content, realizing the product's leap from function to identity. Celebrities, athletes and bloggers, as the symbolic carriers of the brand, have a high degree of social communication in their images and behaviors. Using them as symbolic carriers, the sports scene, sportswear and sports equipment are symbolized to bind the products with positive and active identity labels, such as health, success and professionalism.

In order to realize the effective transformation of identity demand, media need to build a cross-platform communication matrix. In short video platforms (e.g. Jittery Voice, Shutterbug), short video content that combines function and identity; in social platforms (e.g. Xiaohongshu, Weibo), long graphic guides; and in live broadcasting platforms (e.g. Taobao Live, Jingdong Live), a "celebrity wearing show" is carried out. This matrix communication ensures high-frequency reach and deep penetration of symbolic content.

Brands also need to guide consumers through the closed loop from identity to purchase through symbolic content. For example, in celebrity endorsement advertisements, the brand implants the interactive link of "Click to buy the same equipment and unlock the celebrity training program"; in the "Cycling Challenge" activity, the brand provides participants with customized cycling clothes and finish medals with the brand's logo. When consumers share photos of the activity on

social platforms, they automatically become the communication node of the brand's identity symbols, realizing the business closed loop of "content seeding - identity - purchase conversion - social communication".

Sports brands can also further strengthen consumers' purchase intention by effectively integrating multiple content types that significantly influence consumers' purchasing behavior. Specifically, brands can organically combine star athletes' daily videos with branded apparel seeding, sports equipment reviews and other content. For example, in the star athlete's daily vlog, the brand can skillfully arrange for multiple appearances of the brand's products, including displaying the brand's logo in a conspicuous position, and through natural plot design, allowing the star athlete to make recommendations on sportswear in the video, or to display and recommend specific sports equipment in the training scene. Brands can also deeply integrate celebrity endorsement of sports products with sportswear seeding and sports equipment evaluation content. In the content of sportswear seeding or equipment evaluation, timely insertion of celebrity endorsement of the relevant video clips or pictures, through the star effect to enhance the attractiveness of the content and persuasive, so as to stimulate their desire to buy.

### **5.2. Promoting a Sports for All Policy**

The findings suggest that specific content types on social media are effective in enhancing public participation in sports activities increase. In order to promote the national sports policy, the media should post more videos of celebrity athletes' competitions, sports tips and fitness tutorials, sharing of personal sports experiences, sports virtual reality and augmented reality experiences, as well as sports equipment reviews and advertisements of celebrity-endorsed sports brands on social media. You can post videos of celebrity athletes as role models, or simple and interesting sports content to boost users' confidence and self-efficacy. While producing diversified sports content, the media also needs to establish a content distribution matrix to ensure high-frequency reach and in-depth penetration of the content.

It is also necessary to build user-generated content (UGC) identity communities, encouraging consumers to share their personal sports experiences and forming an identity-based community ecology. These UGC contents are processed into symbolic materials by the brand, such as editing users' sports stories into a series of videos of "outdoor experts". This kind of content not only provides a platform for consumers to express their identity, but also strengthens their sense of belonging through community interaction. At the same time, it enhances user participation and symbolizes sports as a status symbol of "healthy lifestyle".

## **6. Conclusion**

### **6.1. Summary of Social Media's Impact on Sports Consumer Behavior**

Specific content types of on social media are effective in increasing public participation in sports activities and desire to purchase sports products. The content of star athletes' daily videos, sports brand clothing seeding, sports equipment reviews, and advertisements of celebrity-endorsed sports brands had a more significant effect on purchases, whereas videos of celebrity athletes' competitions, sports tips and fitness tutorials, sharing of personal sports experiences, sports virtual reality and augmented reality experiences, as well as

sports equipment reviews and advertisements of celebrity-endorsed sports brands had a more significant effect on the increase of participation.

## 6.2. Implications For Social Media Marketing for the Sports Industry

Sports brands and media should focus on producing high-impact social media content. Sports brands need to build emotional resonance with their products and sports to create a social identity that will drive consumer purchasing behavior. Media should promote participation in sports through role modeling, self-efficacy, social identity building, immersive experiences, and purchase decision influencing. Sports brands and media can optimize social media content through innovative integration and build cross-platform communication matrices for deep penetration. At the same time, it is also necessary to use data monitoring and analysis tools to monitor the effect of content dissemination and consumer feedback in real time, so as to adjust the content strategy and marketing direction in a timely manner. Pay attention to the hot trends in social media and launch symbolic content related to popular sports or topics in a timely manner.

The State should establish long-term and stable cooperative relationships with social media and star athletes to jointly promote the dissemination of sports content and the development of sports activities for mutual benefit. It should respond to and support the policy of sports for all, and utilize the advantages of social media to promote sports activities and enhance public participation in sports, so as to contribute to the cause of sports for all.

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