

Sociological study of the role of social networks on promoting social cooperation in sports and sports tourism; case study of Instagram athletes
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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the sociological role of social networks in promoting social cooperation in sport and sports tourism; the case study was of Instagram athletes. The present study is an applied study in terms of purpose and according to the executive steps of the research, and the type of data is a mixed study in which quantitative and qualitative techniques were used. in the second part of the study, the nature of the study in terms of data type, quantity, and data collection method was a survey and field. the statistical population of this study includes all users of Instagram social network who were following athletes ' personal pages in this social network also, since the questionnaire of this study was extracted from the analysis of qualitative results related to thematic analysis of virtual pages and the number of the final questions of the questionnaire was 51 questions, the statistical sample size was 357 users of Instagram social network considering 7 samples per question. in the inferential part, in order to test the research hypotheses and also to investigate and Smart PLS3, were used. Social networks as a space for exchange of experiences, information, and mutual support allow athletes and fans to communicate with each other and strengthen the culture of cooperation. These interactions not only increase motivation and a spirit of cooperation among athletes, but also help promote social awareness and build a committed and empathetic sports community. as a result, social networks as an effective tool in creating solidarity and social support in sport, can help improve the quality of life and mental health of individuals.

Keywords: Social network, Sport tourism, Social contributions, Sport, Instagram.

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1. Introduction

In today's world, social networks are recognized as a key tool in promoting sports tourism. These platforms allow athletes, tourists and sports enthusiasts to share their experiences and promote social contributions. Through sharing images, videos and comments, users can inspire and motivate each other to participate in sports and tourism activities. These interactions not only help to raise awareness about sport tourism destinations, but can also help to strengthen social relationships and build active and dynamic sport communities (Moolah et al., 2021). In addition, social networks act as a platform for the exchange of information and resources in the field of sports tourism. Using these platforms, organizations and related institutions can promote sports events, competitions and tourism programs effectively and help attract tourists and athletes. This type of social assistance not only helps strengthen the local economy, but can also help preserve local culture and identity in sport tourism destinations. As such, social networks are recognized as an effective tool in the sustainable development of sport tourism and the promotion of social assistance in this area (Pedagoa et al., 2022). In their study, Jan et al. (2024) examined the impact of social networks on sport tourism, stating that focusing on the capabilities of social media in increasing the attractiveness of destinations and strengthening emotional connections between tourists and destinations reveals gaps and research challenges such as understanding the long-term effects of marketing and optimizing personalized content. It also emphasizes the importance of adapting to emerging platforms and technologies and points to the need for innovative approaches to maximise the potential of social media in sport tourism. Instagram is particularly popular among young people (Chi et al., 2017). In recent years, the number of people using online stores on Instagram has increased. In November 2016, there were more than 600 million monthly active users on Instagram, accounting for more than 20 percent of Internet users, including 51 percent male and 49 percent female (Smith, 2016). The emergence of social networks has also changed many areas of communication, one of which is the field of sport. The impact of social networks such as Instagram on professional sports can be seen as a revolution (Larkin et al., 2015). These networks have influenced the way athletes and clubs interact with fans (Wittkamper et al., 2012), the international relationship with fans (Shank and Libberger, 2014), and the

perception of fan motivation and behavior on the part of sports clubs. in fact, new communication media have led to a kind of double integration of different fields and interaction and interaction effects of fields on each other. in the most obvious layer of the influence of media and social and communication networks on the idea of sport, it can be noted to face and strengthen athletes ' relationships with society. Today, almost no professional athlete can be found who does not interact with all social networks. social networks are also a kind of branding tools that sport personalities use to strengthen their personal brand (kashkar et al, 2016). studying the effects of professional athletes ' performance on social networks in an interactive way so that both the content of the pages and its feedback among the users of social networks can lead to a deeper understanding of the impact of social networks on ethical values and provide the ground for the purposeful use of social networks in promoting ethical values. especially in the field of social cooperation, it is possible to recognize the effective mechanisms of social networks and the presence of athletes in social networks on strengthening social cooperation can be positively benefited from these networks and athletes' brand to strengthen social cooperation and consequently create capital and social participation (Yaqoobi et al., 2019). Friedberg et al. (2023) used social network analysis to assess athletes ' leadership and cohesion. the results showed that high network density and low degree concentration were found for both athlete leadership network and cohesion network, with high degree centrality for each team member. in addition, a strong correlation was found between athlete leadership and cohesion networks ($p \leq 0.001$), indicating a positive relationship between athlete leadership links and cohesion links. finally, a significant correlation was found between the athlete 's self - ranking leadership and athlete 's leadership networks and cohesion. the sum of these data shows that a cohesive team shares leadership responsibilities with many links between teammates. in a study, marion et al. (2017) analyzed social media sentiments in international and professional sporting events. the results have shown that emotions have changed during the event and negative emotions have increased. this exploratory study seeks to unravel some of the complexities of international and professional sport event management. lagrang et al. (2021) investigated the presence of sport medicine practitioners on social media. in total, 505 physicians were identified in four professional sports.

64.6 % of physicians were orthopedic surgeons. of the 505 doctors, 65.7 % were on social media. Nearly two-thirds of professional team doctors are on social media, most of them on LinkedIn. Medical education has been the biggest cause of sports doctors' presence on social media. ganji et al. (1403) also analyzed the life experience of professional athletes on the social network Instagram. after the integration, consolidation and elimination of the subject, the researcher selected the initial themes that were the most appropriate for this research and will probably have fruitful results. the researcher selected themes that offered more potential for significant findings in the study. the findings revealed three main themes: " liking and commenting ", " following " and " gaining fans ". The analysis shows that social media provides a new, personalized and unfiltered way for athletes to communicate messages without the media of public relations or journalists. the main concern of this research has been to understand the mechanisms of influence of these social networks and especially the performance of professional athletes in these networks on the promotion of social cooperation. since the research pennine sample is not a precedent, while this research has thematic innovation, it can also partially compensate the research gap in this field. in such a situation, the aim of this study is to investigate the role of social networks in promoting social cooperation behavior. the issue that this research pursues is that how social networks affect social values and especially sport tourism?

2. Method

in terms of purpose, this study is among the applied studies and according to the executive steps of the research and the type of data is among the mixed studies in which quantitative and qualitative techniques were used. the sequence of the research techniques was qualitative - quantitative. in the first step, in order to identify the role of social networks on promoting social cooperation in sports and sports tourism, thematic analysis of professional athletes ' intagree page and feedback on republishing Instagram content of these pages in social networks and sports field of the country were discussed. in the next step and the results of the exploratory and qualitative phase of the first phase, a field survey was designed and developed and the elements and components discovered in this section were put to the test of statistical

analysis. in the second part of the study, the nature of the study in terms of data type, quantity and data collection method was survey and field. the statistical population of this study includes all the users of Instagram social network who were following athletes ' personal pages in this social network. also, since the questionnaire of this study was extracted from the analysis of qualitative results related to thematic analysis of virtual pages and the number of the final questions of the questionnaire was 51 questions, the statistical sample size was 357 users of the social network of this tagram considering 7 samples per question. The method of data collection, as mentioned, included both a documentary study (the social pages of athletes) and a field study. in the document analysis section, phishing was used to collect data and the collected data were analyzed by content analysis method. In the field section, the field method was used and the researcher-made questionnaire (based on the first stage of the research) was used. -data analysis in this study has been done in two levels. in the first part, the content analysis of the data obtained from the analysis of the athletes ' social network pages was used. Thematic analysis (TA) is a method for the analysis of qualitative data and one of a cluster of methods that focuses on the identification of semantic patterns in a data set. this analysis is the process of identifying patterns or themes within qualitative data. brown and Clark (2013) consider thematic analysis to be the first qualitative method to be learned because it provides core skills and is useful for performing many other types of analysis. there are various methods for thematic analysis in which the six - stage model of brown and clark (2006) was used. data analysis in this section was done in MAXQDA software environment version 2020. in the quantitative part, statistical analysis was used to investigate the data. in this section, descriptive and inferential statistics were used. in the descriptive part, frequency distribution tables and descriptive statistics were used. in the inferential part, in order to test the research hypotheses and also to investigate and confirm the confirmatory factor analysis of the research constructs, regression test, estimating the factor loads and path coefficients in the environment of spss v. 25 and Smart PLS were used.

3. Result

Table 1. Evaluation of the overall reliability of the scale by Cronbach's alpha method

Acceptable quantity	Cronbach's alpha value	Number of items	scale
Larger than 0.7	0/752	6	Type of content
	0/692	6	Attitude to the Sporting Face
	0/804	5	Feedback
	0/631	6	Features of the contact
	0/819	9	Content mechanism
	0/975	18	Social assistance
	0/715	3	Tourism in sport

in table 1. the results related to the reliability of the sport face attitude variable with regard to the elimination of each of the questions are presented. based on the reported results, it can be said that if the fifth question of this construct, " " in my opinion, known athletes on Instagram are altruistic people " " is omitted, the Cronbach 's alpha value will be significantly improved, so this question has been removed from the analysis in the model test.

Table 2. Distribution of respondents in male and female groups

percent	Abundance	Sex
49/6	177	man
50/4	180	Zen
100	357	kell

according to the results, 177 respondents (49.6 %) were male and 180 respondents (50.4 %) were female.

table 3. Distribution of respondents in study groups

Percentage cumulative frequency	Percentage of valid frequency	Percentage of frequency	Abundance	
1/1	1/1	1/1	4	Less than a diploma
14	12/9	12/9	46	Diploma
78/4	64/4	64/4	230	Bachelor of Science
95/5	17/1	17/1	61	Master of Science
98/9	3/4	3/4	12	Doctorate
	1/1	1/1	4	invalid reply
100	100	100	357	kell

in table 3. the results related to the distribution of respondents in educational groups are presented. 230 respondents were educated at undergraduate level (64.4 % of the sample), 61 in postgraduate level (17.1 % of the sample), 46 in diploma level (12.9 % of the sample), 12 in phd level (3.4 % of the sample) and 4 in less than diploma level (1.1 % of the sample). Four people did not answer the question.

diagram 1. Path coefficient of the model of social cooperation and sport tourism

Table 4. Meaning of operating loads

P Values	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	
0/00	14/533	b1 - feedback
0/00	55/863	b2 - feedback
0/00	45/258	b3 - feedback
0/00	35/934	b4 - feedback

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0/00	6/425	b5 - feedback
0/00	26/375	H1 - Social Assistance
0/00	14/458	H10 - Social Assistance
0/00	54/937	H11 - Social Assistance
0/00	21/389	H12 - Social Assistance
0/00	29/765	H13 - Social Assistance
0/00	34/005	H14 - Social Assistance
0/00	38/715	H15 - Social Assistance
0/00	25/902	H16 - Social Assistance
0/00	33/396	H17 - Social Assistance
0/00	25/350	H18 - Social Assistance
0/00	21/034	H2 - Social Assistance
0/00	14/475	h3 - Social Assistance
0/00	43/457	H4 - Social Assistance
0/00	10/970	h5 - Social Assistance
0/00	57/334	H6 - Social Assistance
0/00	35/071	H7 - Social Assistance
0/00	45/835	H8 - Social Assistance
0/00	13/172	H9 - Social Assistance
0/00	6/157	m1 - addressable attribute
0/00	28/207	m2 - addressable attribute
0/00	16/658	m3 - addressable attribute
0/00	0/352	m5 - contact feature
0/00	5/907	m6 - addressable attribute
0/00	22/073	Mo1 - Embossing the instrument
0/00	20/218	mo1 - content mechanism
0/00	17/457	mo2 - sensory - motivational
0/00	12/124	mo2 - content mechanism
0/00	31/039	Mo3 - Notification
0/00	17/513	mo3 - content mechanism
0/00	46/460	Mo4 - Notification
0/00	19/217	mo4 - content mechanism
0/00	16/831	mo5 - sensory - motivational
0/00	14/658	mo5 - content mechanism
0/00	11/350	mo6 - sensory - motivational
0/00	10/582	mo6 - content mechanism
0/00	20/400	mo7 - embossed instrument

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0/00	14/954	mo7 - content mechanism
0/00	11/607	mo8 - sensory - motivational
0/00	14/983	mo8 - content mechanism
0/00	13/255	mo9 - embossed maker
0/00	11/657	mo9 - content mechanism
0/00	66/773	nbc1 - Attitude to the Sporting Face
0/00	2/037	nbc2 - Attitude to the Sporting Face
0/00	17/039	nbc3 - Attitude to the Sporting Face
0/00	0/211	nbc5 - Attitude to the Sporting Face
0/00	21/480	nbc6 - Attitude to the Sporting Face
0/00	39/202	nm1 - Content Evaluation
0/00	28/213	nm2 - Content Evaluation
0/00	42/071	3 nm - Content Evaluation
0/00	2/541	nm4 - Content Evaluation
0/00	46/006	5 nm - Content Evaluation
0/00	33/888	nm6 - Content Evaluation
0/00	3/241	Nbc1 - Sports Tourism
0/00	20/324	Nbc2 - Sports Tourism
0/00	18/356	Nbc3 - Sports Tourism

the results are presented in table 4. the output related to the significance of factorial loads has been reported. the t - statistics related to the factor loads of each item on its respective factor are presented in this table and the acceptable validity criterion here is the significance of the t - values at the level of 0.05 (above 1.96) or 0.01 (above 2.58). the results show that for most items, factorial loads are significant. The significance of the factorial loads of the two questions has not been confirmed; in my opinion, I am a kind person. In my opinion, well-known athletes on Instagram are altruistic people.

Table 5. The results of the test of the impact of research variables on the tested model

P Value	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	
0/004	2/895	Attitudes to the face of sport * Content evaluation - > Social contribution
0/00	19/972	Content evaluation - > Feedback
0/038	2/085	Content Evaluation - > Social Assistance _
0/00	4/664	Feedback - > Social Assistance _
0/00	6/485	Content Mechanism - > Social Assistance _
0/00	29/959	Attitudes to the Sporting Face _ - > Content Evaluation
0/932	0/086	Attitudes to the Face of Sport _ - > Social Assistance
0/095	1/670	Contact feature - > Content evaluation
0/001	3/429	Contact Us - > Social Assistance _
0.014	2/154	Sport tourism - > Social assistance _

finally, the results reported in table 5. it shows that the research model explains 47.6 % of variance of social cooperation variable. finally, attitude to sport face component had the greatest effect on content evaluation with t - value (29.959) and path coefficient (0.783) with significant level of 0.00 between model components. also, the attitude to sport face had the lowest effect on social cooperation with t - value (0.086), path coefficient (0.007) and significant level (0.932).

4. Conclusions

the results of this study can be discussed in two parts. in the first part of the results of the research, the mechanisms of role - making and the impact of social networks in the form of interactive analysis of the action of famous sports figures and users on social cooperation and sports tourism has been revealed. interactive analysis of content shared by well - known figures on Instagram 's social network and user feedback in the form of comments on this content revealed 31 basic concepts that were grouped into 7 main themes at a higher level of abstraction. these main themes include content mechanism, content type, audience, feedback, attitude to sport face and outcome, each of which is described in the following.

content mechanism: the content mechanism refers to abstracted conceptual codes that refer to the technique of creating content. for example, in this context, content analysis of video, text and video content has shown that the content can be grouped into three categories of sensory motivation, information and highlighting. these techniques have been effective on stimulating cooperative action / attitude, which has been studied statistically in the hypothesis testing section.

evaluation (type) of content: the type of content is abstracted in reference to conceptual codes that represent the audience 's assessment of the shared content. these assessments are categorized as attractive, informative, honest, banal, wise and reliable, and then their impact on cooperative action / attitude is investigated.

audience: the audience 's personal characteristics are also classified under a conceptual code.

- Feedback
feedback to the content by users in the form of likes, comments, republishing, comments on the text republished and adhering to social campaigns is categorized under a main theme.
- Attitude to the Sporting Face
the attitude to sport faces refers to how users and audiences of sport faces virtual pages on instagram judge and evaluate these sport faces. the effect of attitude toward sport figures has been measured in the form of independent variable and moderator variable in the modified model on cooperative action / attitude.
- outcome (cooperative action / attitude)
finally, cooperative action / attitude as a thematic theme that these contents have been organized in order to stimulate it has been evaluated and evaluated under one variable in the research model.

the results in the test section of the social media impact model on cooperative action showed that evaluation of content significantly affects the feedback that the audience gives to Instagram posts of sports figures, which means that if the audience has a positive evaluation of content as attractive, honest, wise, learned, reliable and deep content, they will give more feedback to it in the form of commenting, republishing, liking and vice versa. the results also show that more feedback to cooperative content on sport faces pages by users has an impact on cooperative social action /

attitude in these users. the mechanism of content in the form of informative, eminent instrumental and sensory - motivational content has also been reported to affect social cooperation. sport face attitude has also been reported to have an impact on the evaluation that users have of content, meaning that sport face attitude (positive or negative) determines to some extent what evaluation people have of this content. also, the role of audience characteristics on social cooperative action / attitude and interactive role of sport face attitude and content evaluation on cooperative action / attitude has been confirmed. the characteristics of the audience and the attitude to the sport face had no significant effect on the evaluation of content and social cooperation. based on the obtained results, it can be confirmed that social networks and specifically the interaction of sports figures and users in these networks in the form of shared content and reaction and feedback to these content affects social cooperative action and in general, the variables of the research model explain 47.6 % of the variance of social cooperative variable.

Social network on sports tourism

social networks, as a powerful tool in today 's world, have a profound impact on promoting sport tourism. these platforms allow users to share their experiences and increase the attractiveness of sport destinations through visual and written content. by creating online communities and expert groups, athletes and sports enthusiasts can exchange information and experiences, and this helps to foster a sense of solidarity and social connections in this area. also, nostalgic content and promotion of sport events can create deeper emotional connections between tourists and destinations, which leads to more attraction of tourists and increase their participation in sport activities. finally, the sociological study of the role of social networks in promoting sport tourism shows that these media not only act as a marketing tool, but also help to strengthen social and cultural relations. given the positive effects of social media on attracting tourists and increasing participation in sport events, it is essential that organizations and institutions related to sport tourism use these platforms effectively (Mishra et al., 2022).the conclusion of the sociological study of the role of social networks in promoting social cooperation and tourism in sport clearly shows that these platforms not only act as communication tools, but also as catalysts for the creation and strengthening of social relations. by expanding the use of social networks, athletes and fans are able to establish deeper connections that lead to the exchange of experiences, ideas and mutual support. these interactions, especially in challenging times, such as injury or failure, can act as a source of motivation and positive morale and foster a

sense of solidarity among members of the sport community (watch et al., 2019). in addition, social networks allow athletes to easily share their social and charitable activities and encourage others to participate in these activities. This not only helps promote a culture of collaboration, but can also lead to the creation of a committed and responsible sports community. also, by raising social awareness and addressing social issues through these platforms, athletes can serve as role models for young people and promote positive values such as cooperation, empathy and social responsibility (dubles et al., 2018). finally, the positive effects of social networks on social contributions in sport lead to the creation of a supportive and energetic environment in which people can help each other grow and develop. these interactions not only help improve athletic performance, but also strengthen social bonds and promote the mental health of the community. as such, it can be said that social networks play a vital and undeniable role as an effective tool in creating social solidarity and cooperation in sport (jamar et al., 2024).

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