SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE AMONG GENERATION Z IN A SPORT EVENT

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ABSTRACT

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Abstract

Social media in today's world continues to grow its popularity. Its use is no more limited to a specific time or place making it a new element in everything that we do. This Master's Thesis examines social media use in a sport event context. The event examined is the European Olympic Festival (EYOF) 2022 held in Vuokatti, Finland. The athletes attending the event are 14–18-year-olds. The focus of this study is on generation Z, including people born between 1997-2010. The subjects of this study participated in the EYOF2022-event, either as a volunteer or an athlete.

The main objective of this study is to gain insight and understanding of generation Z's social media usage habits. The matter is examined through for example social media platforms, reasons behind use and social media engagement behaviour. The other theme in this study is to understand the whole event experience and define the elements that are most important to the participants.

The study is performed with a qualitative approach. The empirical data was gathered with theme interviews with 8 participants. The interviewees had attended the event as athletes, volunteers or had been the organizer, allowing the study to have multiple perspectives. The interviews were then transcribed. The results and findings from the data were then thematized in different categories and analyzed thoroughly based on the theoretical background that was presented.

The results of this study show that for generation Z, social media has a major and important role in nowadays sport events. Compared to regular social media usage, attending an event can make the participant even more active on social media, although they are on-site to witness the events happen. Social media is used for many reasons from entertainment to seeking information. For event organizers, social media can be used for multiple purposes. In this study, some examples of social media's role were to shape the event atmosphere, offer visibility for athletes, create a feeling of communality among participants and make the participants more interested in the event. Event experience on the other hand is more than merely a sport performance or attending otherwise, but rather a holistic experience where social interactions and positive atmosphere play an important part.

Key words	
Social media, generation z, service quality, social media engagement behaviour, event experience	
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TIIVISTELMÄ

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Tiivistelmä

Sosiaalinen media nykyaikaisessa maailmassa on entistä enemmän käytetympi. Sen käyttö ei ole enää sidoksissa tiettyyn aikaan tai paikkaan vaan kulkee mukanamme kaikkialle tehden siitä uudenlaisen elementin moneen ympäristöön. Tässä pro gradu -työssä tutkitaan sosiaalisen median käyttöä urheilutapahtuman kontekstissa. Urheilutapahtuma, johon työ sijoittuu, on Euroopan Nuorten Olympiafestivaali (European Youth Olympic Festival, EYOF) 2022, joka järjestettiin Vuokatissa, Suomessa. Tapahtuman osallistujat ovat 14-18-vuotiaita. Tutkimuksen kohderyhmäksi valittiin sukupolvi Z, sisältäen vuosina 1997-2010 syntyneitä osanottajia.

Tämän tutkimuksen pääasiallisena tavoitteena on saada tietoa ja syventää ymmärrystä sukupolvi Z:n sosiaalisen median käyttötottumuksista. Aihetta tutkitaan esimerkiksi sosiaalisen median kanavien, käytön syiden ja sosiaalisen median sitoutumiskäyttäytymisen käsitteiden kautta. Toinen tutkimuksen teema on kokonaisvaltaisen urheilutapahtumakokemuksen ymmärtäminen sekä niiden tekijöiden erotteleminen, jotka eniten vaikuttavat osallistujan tapahtumakokemukseen.

Tutkimus toteutettiin kvalitatiivisella menetelmällä. Empiirinen data kerättiin teemahaastatteluilla, joihin osallistui 8 osallistujaa. Tutkimukseen osallistujat ovat ottaneet osaa EYOF 2022-tapahtumaan joko vapaaehtoisena, urheilijana tai järjestäjänä. Haastattelut litteroitiin ja tematisoinnin avulla jaettiin eri osioihin, joiden avulla voitiin vastata tutkimuskysymyksiin ja jotka olivat muodostuneet pohjautuen teoreettiseen viitekehykseen. Tutkimuksen tulokset osoittavat, että sukupolvi Z:n mielestä sosiaalisella medialla on vaikuttava rooli urheilutapahtumassa. Verrattuna tavalliseen sosiaalisen median käyttöön, urheilutapahtuman aikana osallistuja saattoi olla jopa aktiivisempi sosiaalisessa mediassa, vaikka he olivat paikan päällä todistamassa tapahtumia. Sosiaalista mediaa käytetään monesta eri syystä, viihteestä tiedon etsimiseen.

Tässä tutkimuksessa sosiaalisen median rooliksi nähtiin esimerkiksi tunnelman nostattaminen, näkyvyyden tarjoaminen urheilijoille, yhteisöllisyyden tunteen herättäminen ja osallistujien kokemuksen parantaminen. Tapahtumakokemuksen koetaan puolestaan olevan enemmän kuin pelkkä urheilusuoritus tai työvuoro. Tutkimus ehdottaa tapahtumakokemuksen olevan kokonaisvaltainen kokemus, jossa sosiaalisella vuorovaikutuksella ja positiivisella ilmapiirillä on suuri rooli.

Asiasanat	
Sosiaalinen media, sukupolvi z, palvelun laatu, sitoutuminen, tapahtumakokemus	
Säilytyspaikka	
Jyväskylän yliopiston kirjasto	

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CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

Tables

Figures

1   INTRODUCTION

Our everyday sport events have undergone changes and are somehow renewed today than what they were compared to just 20 years ago. The experience of the event has partially remained similar: for example, in Olympics athletes still compete of rank order in a specific sport. Whether you are participating as a competitor or spectator, you take part to be present when the rank order is being sorted out. Other traditional elements that belong in sport event experience are for instance the crowd cheering for their favorites or athletes fully focusing on their upcoming performance. Nowadays we can however find a new relevant element in sports events, that has not existed for long but is present in each moment: the use of social media. Because social media has become so ordinary, we might not directly notice it's impact on us, but without them the experience of the event could in fact be very different.

So, over the years it has become clear, that digital resources and usage of technologies has shaped everyday life and the experiences in it. Yoo (2010) refers to this with the term experiential computing. The use of digital resources is not limited to a certain time or place, like homes or libraries, as we carry them with us everywhere. When we acknowledge the fact that events are no exception to this, we can understand that it has an impact on the whole experience and on the other hand our own behavior.

This master's thesis discusses how the use of social media in a sport event affects the participant's experience. The latest rising trends in sport marketing have included the use of smart phones in a sport event. Former research has mainly been from audience's point-of-view and has featured smartphone use in general. In one research, Horbel et al. (2016) analyzed the spectators' experience and how value is co-created in sport events. Later in 2021 research, Horbel et al. further analyzed the spectators value co-creation process and how smart phones as digital resources have an impact on the process. Inversini, Sit and Pyle (2016) on the other hand approached the matter of what kind of activity the spectators engage in digitally while in a sport event. MacIntosh and Dill (2017) focused on the athlete perspective and discussed elements affecting their experience. In this study, social media was also discussed as one element. As vast amount of earlier research on the subject has been from a spectator's point of view, this thesis aspires to include information from the participating athlete's point of view.

Previous research has also mainly focused on smartphone usage which can include multiple activities, but in this thesis the focus is on social media use.

Social media usage has without a doubt shaped our experiences everywhere and perhaps even changed the way we look at things. As Horbel et al. (2021) explained, even though sport events themselves have not radically changed over time, technological advancements do bring an interesting new element to them. Spectators, athletes, and other participants now have the possibility of sharing their experience online and with the rise of social media, there is no going back to time before this. The effect can most strongly be seen with young people, who seem to practically live with a phone in their hand. Because this is a moderately new, but yet timely and widespread phenomenon, this thesis aims to understand it better in Finland and from young age groups', generation Z's point of view.

The case event in this thesis is the European Youth Olympic Festival, which is organized in 2022 in Vuokatti, Finland. The European Youth Olympic Festival (later EYOF) is a sport event, in which the participants are 14-18 years old. The event is organized underneath the European Olympic Committee, and the organizer for 2022 was VuokattiSport. The event's main principle is to teach young athletes to compete with Olympic values that are friendship, fair play and tolerance. The winter event has 1600 participating athletes and judge members from 46 different European Olympic Committees. The event is normally held in odd years, but the 2021 competitions were postponed to 2022 due to COVID-19. EYOF2022 was held in March 2022. (EYOF, 2021).

As the EYOF participants are, as mentioned, 14–18-year-old, they are a part of generation Z. Generation Z is often seen to be those born between 1995-2010 (Turner, 2015). The definition of specific birth years varies depending on the source, but the main opinion is that generation Z was born when Internet begun to be within masses reach and technology-mediated communication found its way to people's everyday lives. The generation Z is often described with the word digital native, which means that these individuals have been accustomed to digital platforms and communication from a young age (Turner, 2015). Generation Z has played a part in the rise of social media, as they have different media habits than for example generation Y. Gen Z'ers might not watch television, as they can find entertainment in online streaming services, such as Netflix, or listening to the radio might have changed to Spotify. This means that some of the traditional advertising channels do not reach generation Z as an audience. In turn, it has given a boost to outdoor advertising, such as billboards and mobile advertising, such as in social media. (Haenlain et al., 2020.)

Today's event organizers benefit from social media marketing. Optimizing the value that social media can offer does however require insight: finding ways to increase social media engagement, reaching target groups on most popular platforms and staying on track with the current trends. As generation Z has its own way of using social media, it must be understood how and why they use it. These are some of the subjects that this study aims to offer vision in, helping sport event organizers to better understand and succeed with generation Z as a target group. We also take a look at the whole event experience and what features are most essential related to it.

This study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. How does generation Z use social media?
2. What is the role of social media in a sport event?
3. How does social media engagement behaviour appear related to the event?
4. What factors are most essential in the event experience?

The research is executed as qualitative research with theme interviews. The participants in the research have participated in the EYOF2022-event, as an athlete or as volunteers. The interviewees are born in 1997-2010, thus representing generation Z.

This thesis is constructed so that after this introduction theoretical background is presented, ending in a conclusive research model. After this, the methodology is explained. The results chapter is divided into themes based on the research questions and offers a view from the organizer as well. The conclusion chapter gathers the most important findings both theoretically and practically. Lastly, trustworthiness and limitations of the study and future research topics are considered. References can be found in the end of this thesis.

2   SOCIAL MEDIA

2.1   Social media and its platforms

Social media can be perceived and defined in many ways. According to Carr and Hayes (2015), there are some elements and specific qualities that can clarify the meaning of social media. Firstly, social media is based on Internet-based online tools. Secondly, social media includes channels that allow asynchronized communication between users, although some platforms might offer some better features, such as messaging opportunities when communication happens real-time. In other words, social media channels continue to function even though users are not actively engaging. (Carr & Hayes, 2015.)

The usual view on social media is that it is based on interaction between people and sharing content together (Kaplan & Haenlain, 2010). However, in comparison to this view, Carr and Hayes (2015) note that social media interaction it is only a perception of interactivity. Interaction on social media might happen by for example algorithms and other digital programming possibilities and not actually with other people, creating the perception of interactivity. As a fourth defining element, social media creates value through user-generated content. User-generated content does not however have to be created by an individual user as it can also be made by for example a brand. Value is constructed when users can interact with each other related to the published content, by for example reacting and commenting to it. Finally, social media users together create a massive audience that can then be reached through different platforms and channels. (Carr & Hayes, 2015.)

Social media has quickly become an important channel for marketers to reach their audience because of its popularity and high return on invest (ROI). According to a wide survey by HubSpot (2021), Iskiev (2021) reports that 39% of those who are not currently utilizing social media are planning on doing it in 2022, 26% of marketers are planning to invest in social media more than other channels and 51% are planning to invest more in social media marketing next year. Generally, the most popular social media platforms in 2021 were Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp and Instagram. The platforms that have most generation Z users are Snapchat, TikTok and Instagram (Petrock, 2021), which is why these platforms are discussed in this study. Along with these are additions of Facebook and YouTube, as they have most active users and are official channels for VuokattiSport and EYOF2022.

2.1.1 Facebook

Facebook is a social networking platform launched in 2004. It quickly became popular worldwide, reaching 500 million active users by July 2010. By October 2012, the number was over one billion. Over the years, Facebook group expanded its activities from one platform and introduced other social media platforms. It

acquired platforms such as Instagram and WhatsApp. In early 2022, the brand changed its name to Meta. (Meta, 2022.)

Facebook itself as a social media platform is based on the idea of creating user profiles and networking with other users. Users can create their own content (text, photo, video) but also react and comment on other user's content. Other features that Facebook offers are for example messenger where users can send direct messages to each other, stories which are short content viewable for 24 hours, marketplace and groups where users with same interests can communicate. Businesses can also use Facebook by creating pages and events. Facebook also offers advertising opportunities. (Chi, 2021.)
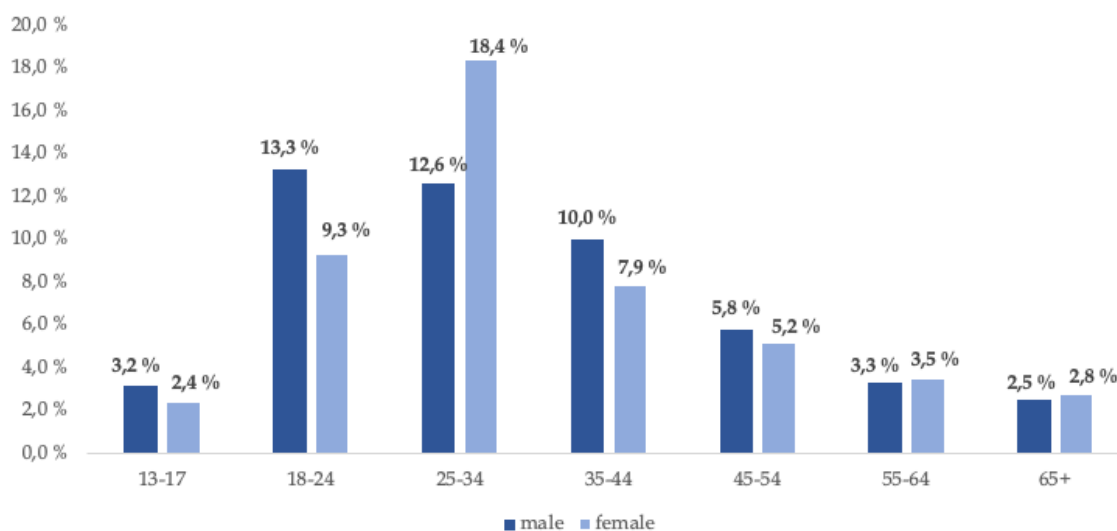
FIGURE 1 Distribution of Facebook users worldwide as of January 2022, by gender and age, Statista Research Department 2022a

The figure 1 shown above represents the distribution of Facebook users worldwide by age and gender as of January 2022. As shown, the largest user group is 25–34-year-old males. 55-64-year-olds form 6.8% and over 65-year-olds 5.3% of the user base, while 13-17-year-olds form 5.6%. The group of 13–17-year-olds is the second smallest one of all, which might indicate that generation Z'ers might not find Facebook to be one of their preferred social media platforms. (Statista Research Department, 2022a).

2.1.2 Instagram

Per a survey by HubSpot in 2021, Iskiev (2021) states that the most-used social media platform is Instagram. However in 2022, Statista Research Department reported (2022c) that Facebook has the most monthly active users. Instagram is a website and a mobile application originally built in 2010 to share photo and video content with other users and network by commenting and liking other users' content. Instagram has been a part of the Facebook corporation since 2012, ever growing its popularity among all age groups. Instagram has managed to introduce new features keeping it timely and competitive with other similar applications. (Mattern, 2021, 4-10.)
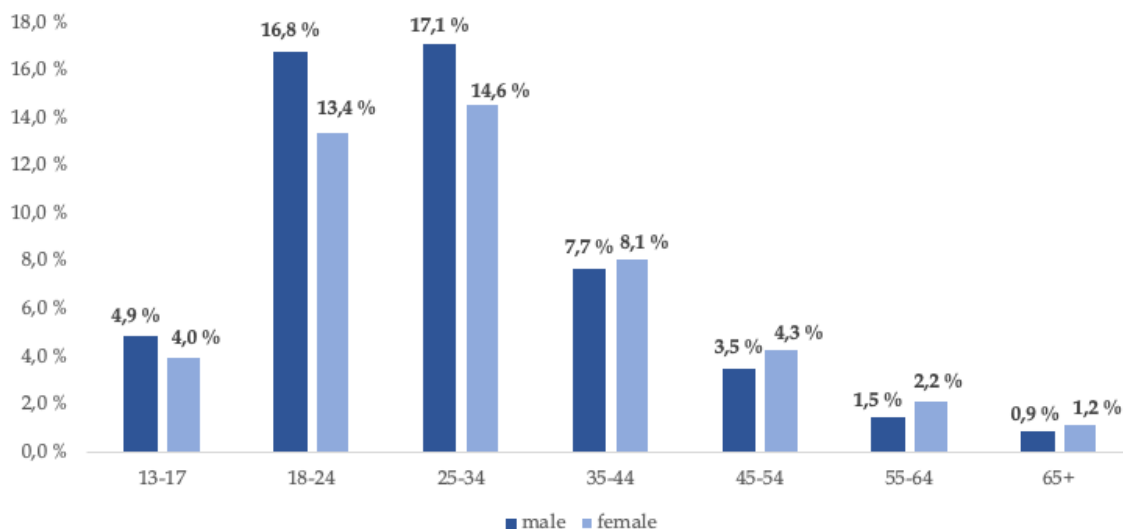
FIGURE 2 Distribution of Instagram users worldwide April 2022, by gender and age, Statista Research Department 2022b

As the figure 2 presents, as of April 2022, Statista Research Department (2022b) reported Instagram to have almost 1.4 billion users worldwide. The largest singular user group was male users between the ages 25 and 34 (17.1%) followed by male users between 18-24 (16.8%). The number of female users within the same age groups was slightly smaller, 14.6% and 13.4%, but making these age groups (18-34) the largest mass. The third largest age group of Instagram users was 35-44-year-olds. 13–17-year-olds altogether formed 8.9% of Instagram users, which is slightly above the user group of 45–54-year-olds. (Statista Research Department, 2022b). The age limit to using Instagram is 13 years (Instagram, 2021). This might explain some of the lack of official data of younger age groups, because those are not compiled in the statistics.

2.1.3 Snapchat

Snapchat, launched in 2011, is a photo- and video-sharing application that is based on the idea of making the content available to the receiver for a certain amount of time and then becoming inaccessible. The time of which the content shows to others can be defined by the user themselves. Snapchat also offers a chat option with the same principle. (Vaterlaus et al., 2016.) As of January 2022, Snapchat was reported to have about 557 million active users monthly (2022c). In the US, Snapchat was found to be the most important social media platform for teenagers. Its popularity has however been somewhat decreasing, but Snapchat still is found to be popular among young age groups. In the U.S., it was reported that 48% of 15-25-year-olds use Snapchat. (Statista Research Department, 2022d.)
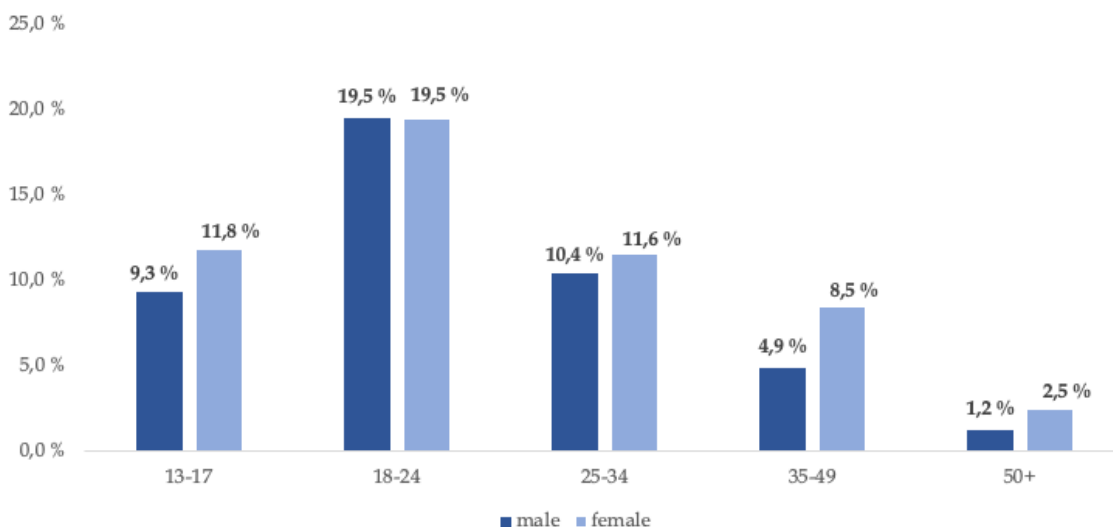
FIGURE 3 Distribution of Snapchat users worldwide as of January 2022, by age and gender. Statista Research Department 2022e

The biggest user group of Snapchat is 18–29-year-olds (Vaterlaus et al., 2016). The figure 3 above presents a survey by Statista Research Department in January 2022. According to the survey, users in the age group 18-24 years made up 39% of Snapchat's user base. The second biggest user group was users aged 25-34. 13-17-year-olds were reported to form over 21% of the audience. Altogether, Snapchat was more popular among females than males. (Statista Research Department, 2022e)

2.1.4 TikTok

During the past years, it has become known that short-form videos are gaining popularity on social media (Wang, 2020, Iskiev, 2021). YouTube is seen to be a platform for longer videos (over 10 minutes), whereas channels such as Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat have been quick to offer platforms for shorter video content (Wang, 2020). New features have been created to support this shift. Instagram feature "stories" are short videos that are viewable for 24 hours before they disappear. The feature has become increasingly prominent and has over 500 million users daily. (Instagram, 2021.) Wang (2020) states that the demand for short-term video content could be resulted from the modern, fast-paced lifestyle. Iskiev (2021) reports that video is the most popular marketing content format with the highest ROI, and that 30% of marketers are planning to favor video as a format of content in 2022.

A Chinese technology company ByteDance saw their opportunities with short videos. TikTok, or Douyin as known in China, was launched in September 2016. In May 2017 it was also launched outside of China. In August 2018 TikTok was merged with musical.ly, which was a similar platform based on short videos that users could for example add music to and browse through other's content. (ByteDance, 2021). Over the few years TikTok became a global phenomenon. In April 2020, TikTok was reported to have 800 million active users worldwide

(Haenlain et al, 2020). In 2022, TikTok had 1.2 billion monthly active users and was estimated to grow up to 1.5 billion by the end of the year (Iqbal, 2022).

The growth of TikTok could be explained by many factors, one of them being an increasing audience of generation Z'ers. According to a survey by Forrester (2021) conducted for 12-17-year-olds, short-form video content was one of the reasons they preferred TikTok over Instagram and Snapchat. Other reasons were entertainment value and that TikTok was found to be more positive-natured than other platforms. (Forrester, 2021.)
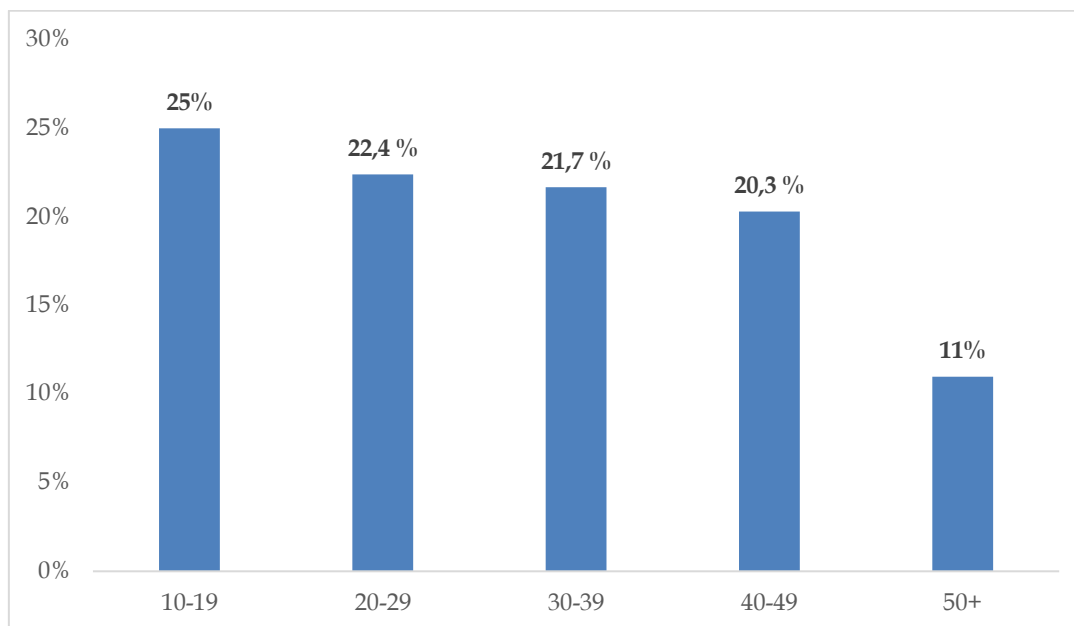
FIGURE 4 Distribution of TikTok users in the U.S. by age, March 2021. Statista Research Department 2021.

The audience in TikTok is young in comparison to some of the other platforms. The average age of a user in the U.S. in 2020 was 27 years, while in comparison the equivalent in Instagram was 34 years and in Facebook 40 years. (Haenlain et al., 2020.) The figure 4 above shows the age distribution as of March 2021 within the U.S. TikTok users. Although the data was collected only from U.S. users with Android, it shows a general direction of the age distribution. As it can be seen, 10-19-year-olds form 25% of the audience in TikTok, making it the largest age group of users. (Statista Research Department, 2021.)

2.1.5 YouTube

Created in 2005, YouTube is a website and app that is based on video sharing. One of the main principles of YouTube is that it is based on user-generated content and it allows users to interact with each other, such as by commenting on videos. YouTube reports to have more than 2 billion monthly users who are logged-in, although it can also be used without having an account. YouTube has also managed to penetrate markets worldwide, having users from multiple countries. (YouTube, 2022).
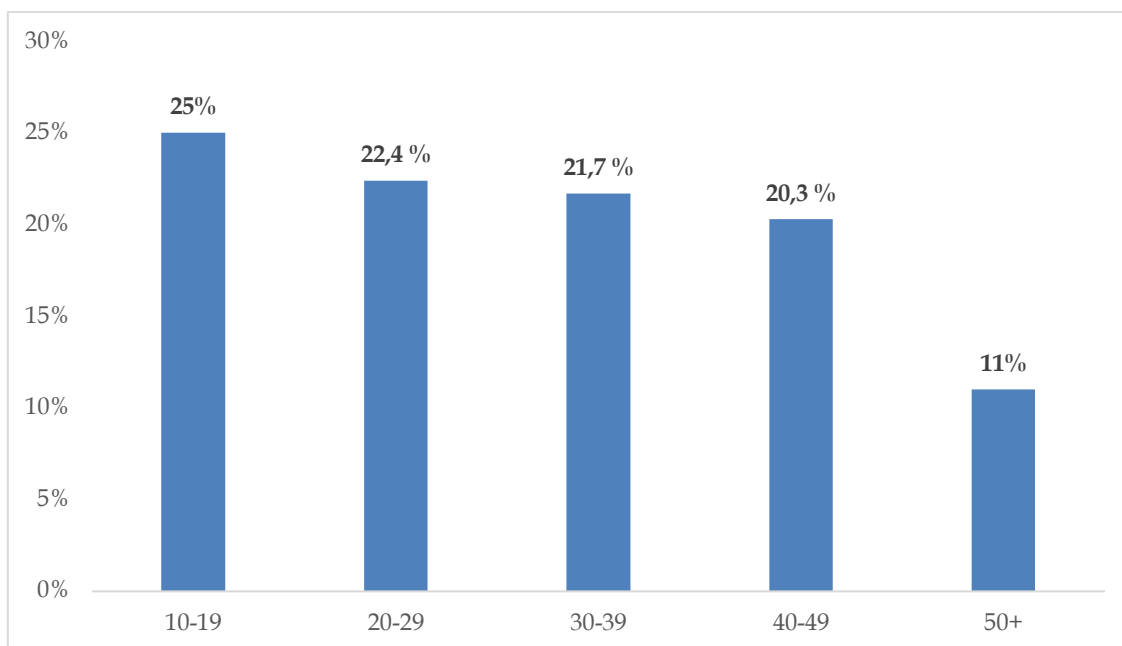
FIGURE 5 Percentage of U.S. users using YouTube in 2020 by age. Statista Research
	Department, 2022.

The figure 5 above represents the percentage of Internet users that use YouTube in the U.S. in the year 2020. As the figure shows, 77% of 15–25-year-olds use YouTube. YouTube is also popular among other age groups. 67% of over 56-year-olds also use YouTube, making it a common social media platform for older people as well. (Ceci, 2022). In 2022, YouTube was reported to be the second most popular platform measured by monthly active users. YouTube had 2.562 million active users, whereas Facebook holding the first place had 2.910 million users. (Statista Research Department, 2022c.)

2.2   Generation Z and social media

As described before, generation Z is often seen as an age group born between 1995-2010. Being used to technology from a young age, the age group seems to have a special interest in it. (Turner, 2015.) According to Pew Research Center (cited in Anderson & Jiang, 2019), teens reported social media to have its sides. On a negative note, social media was seen to create pressure and a feeling of being overwhelmed, but positively to allow them to feel more supported and connected with friends and ease interaction. (Anderson & Jiang, 2019.) Social media has been seen to have major effects on mental health especially among the youth, including issues such as social anxiety, decreased empathy and loneliness (Berryman, Ferguson & Negy, 2017). Despite the negatives, social media usage of generation Z continues to grow.

It is clear that while social media affects the habits of gen Z'ers, this generation also has an effect on social media trends and popular platforms. For example, a HubSpot report concerning the marketing industry trends in 2022 claims that short-form video content is becoming increasingly effective and 30% of social media marketers plan to invest in it as the most important marketing strategy. This could be a result of TikTok's viral growth in recent years. (Iskiev, 2021.)
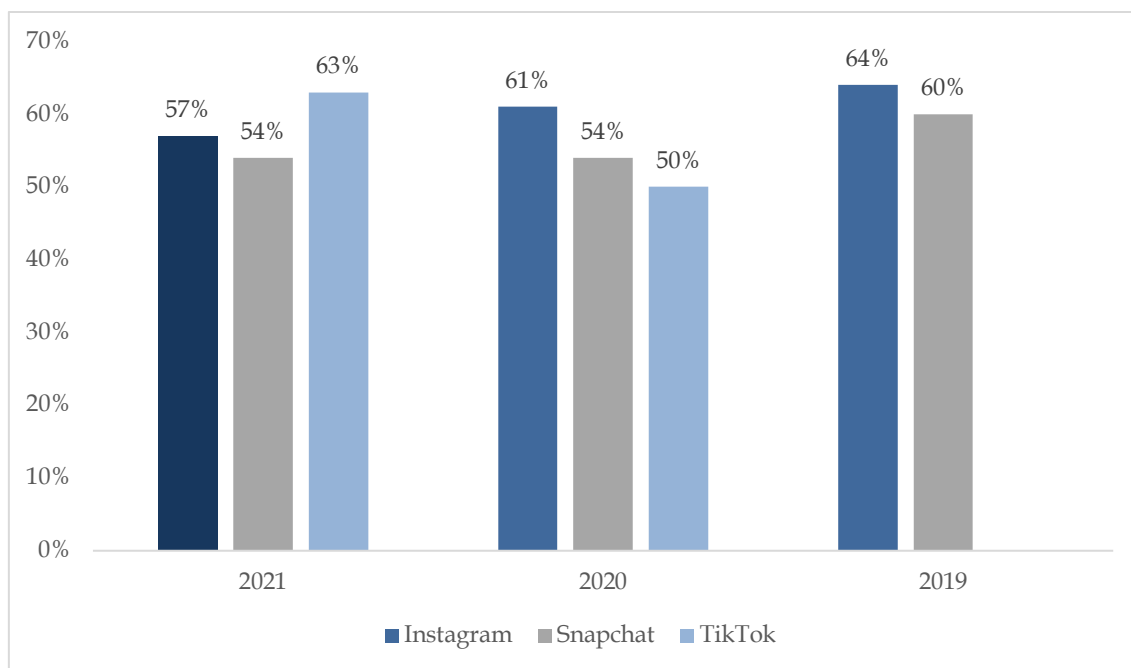
FIGURE 6 US Gen Z youth weekly social media usage 2019-2021, Forrester 2021

Shown in the figure 6 above, according to Forrester's (2021) report on Gen Z's weekly social media usage, U.S. teenagers favor Instagram, Snapchat and TikTok: all platforms that include short-form video content. It was reported that the weekly usage of TikTok among U.S. 12–17-year-olds had risen from 50% to 63% since last year. The usage of TikTok has surpassed Instagram, with its usage dropping from 60% to 57%. In this comparison, Snapchat usage stayed the same, at 54% (Forrester, 2021).

2.3   Cognitive capabilities and use of social media

Smartphones in everyday life allow social media to be present in every situation and its usage is not limited to only a certain time or place. In addition to the impacts on mental health, it should be remembered that the human brain does not have limitless cognitive capabilities. Social media usage can influence our cognitive functions, such as our working memory and attention span. (Lara & Bokoch, 2021.) Attention is defined to be the ability to notice and respond to the changes in an environment, as working memory is the ability to temporarily hold

information in the memory (Lara & Bokoch, 2021). Cognitive factors altogether affect and control everything that we do, and distractions take up space from for example our concentration. Attention and concentration are cognitive resources that are distributed when we are in an environment. Therefore, a distraction averts our attention and concentration into a new direction, allocating them in a different way. (Brown, Tenbrink & LaMarre, 2019.)

Technological distractions that can be for example notifications from social media can have very negative impacts, for example, in traffic. This can describe how social media does affect our cognitive capabilities and allocate them in other directions than what we intended. (Lara & Bokoch, 2021.) The distractive effect of social media has also been studied for example from an academic learning perspective. A study by Rosen, Carrier & Cheever (2013) shows that students who had access to Facebook while studying had lower academic performance and a shorter attention span towards studying than students who did not access social media. Additionally, for example listening to music as a distraction, did not have this same effect. Thus, it can be said that social media requires a lot of cognitive attention and therefore can cause difficulty to multitask. (Rosen et al., 2013.)

The challenge with using social media while performing a task comes from not only the time spent on the distraction but also from the mental orientation back to the task (Brooks, 2015). This is the reason why for example many schools do not allow students to use social media in the classroom. In conclusion, it was found that social media does add to an individual's stress level. This is called "technostress", which in turn is proven to weaken an individual's efficiency and wellbeing as a whole. (Brooks, 2015.)

2.4   Reasons for social media use

Reasons behind social media use have been analyzed ever since its beginning. Whiting and Williams (2013) found ten themes, which involve a vast number of reasons to use social media. The themes were social interaction, seeking information, sharing information, passing time, entertainment, relaxation, communicatory utility, convenience utility, expression of opinions and knowledge about others. From these themes, social interaction was found to be the most important and mentioned by most of the respondents. (Whiting & Williams, 2013.) Brailovskaia, Schillack and Margraf (2020) also note that the main identified reason is social interaction. They also stated that when communication happens online, the environment is favorable to develop relationships and increase the feeling of social belonging, while it can also help diminish the feeling of being shy. Concerning the risks of addictive use, it has been discovered that the risk varies depending on the reasons behind the use. Social interaction, information seeking, entertainment and relaxation have been linked with addictive social media use. This can be explained for example with individuals' high stress levels, which are attempted to be lowered with social media use. (Brailovskaia et al., 2020.)

TABLE 1 Reasons for social media use (Whiting & Williams, 2013).

Theme	% of respondents	Explanation
Social interaction	88%	Connect and interact with friends, family and acquaintances
Information seeking	80%	Finding information about eg. events, sales, businesses, products. Self-education.
Pass time	76%	Using social media to pass free time or for boredom
Entertainment	64%	Source of entertainment, eg. games, music, videos, humor
Relaxation	60%	Escaping stress and reality
Expression of opinions	56%	Expressing thoughts and feelings, ability to be anonymous and criticize others
Communicatory utility	56%	Finding topics to discuss
Convenience utility	52%	Using social media because it is available and accessible anytime
Information sharing	40%	Sharing information about yourself to others
Surveillance, knowledge of others	32%	Watching what other people are doing

Proposing another view, Nadkarni and Hofmann (2012) presented a model that explains why people use social media platforms such as Facebook. According to this dual-factor model, using social media answers two social needs: the need to belong and the need for self-presentation. The need to belong is explained by dependency on social support, which is natural for humans. The lack of social contacts and support might have a negative effect on for example emotional well-being and self-esteem. Self-esteem and self-worth can be seen as monitors to measure how suitable one is to a social group. The feeling of social acceptance can therefore affect one's self-esteem. The connection of using social media and its effect on self-esteem has been debated, but it has been proposed that it improves one's self-esteem, because it increases the sense of belonging. (Nadkarni & Hofmann, 2012.)

The other social need that social media use answers is the need for self-presentation (Nadkarni and Hofmann 2012). On social media platforms users are able to display themselves in an ideal way, which might not be accurate compared to their real life. This phenomenon has been described with the term idealized-virtual identity hypothesis. (Back et al., 2010, Nadkarni & Hofmann, 2012.) It has been a subject of psychological research ever since the beginning of social media, such as MySpace (see for example Manago et al., 2008). It might appear for example when users are posting photo content of themselves, as they often prefer to display the most physically attractive photos, even if they are not accurate to their actual appearance. (Nadkarni & Hofmann, 2012.) Back et al.

(2010) state that online social networking profiles often display ideal-self views and thus might not directly represent the actual personality of the user.

Another thing that has been noticed to increase social media use is the phenomenon called fear of missing out (FOMO). It has been explained to be a feeling, where one is left absent from positive experiences that others are receiving, increasing their desire to be connected to others (Przybylski et al., 2013, Abel, Buff & Burr, 2016). FOMO can be explained with the fact that human beings are of social nature and the feeling of belonging is connected with our well-being (Roberts & David, 2019). FOMO has also been linked to social media use. With the possibility of following other people's lives and seeing what they are doing, it can lead to comparison of one's one life and thus lead to dissatisfaction (Abel, Buff & Burr, 2016). People with higher FOMO often tend to use social media more, because they want to feel connected and be aware of others. FOMO has also been seen to cause smartphone addiction. Higher FOMO is more common with adolescents as connectedness and acceptance of others is important to the youths. (Oberst et al., 2017). Individuals with higher FOMO might therefore find social media to be particularly appealing, which could also have some beneficial outcomes (Przybylski et al., 2013). Engaging with others in social media platforms could help build social capital, increase self-esteem and feel less depressed. Excessive social media use however has its cons, such as increased stress levels, anxiety and lower sleep quality. (Roberts & David, 2019.)

2.5   Social media engagement

While there are multiple reasons behind social media use, the interactive aspect is something that brands and businesses online should attempt to utilize. Social media has the possibility to be a channel for brands to interact with customers and find out their needs and opinions. In general, consumer engagement has been defined as a process where a customer progresses from being new to the brand into a loyal customer (Bowden, 2009). Although engagement is often perceived as a positive term, it must be kept in mind that engagement behavior varies in valence and intensity. From the businesses' point-of-view, engagement can be positive or negative-valanced and also vary from active to passive behavior. (Dolan et al. 2016). In this sense, engagement happens naturally, but appears in different forms.

Social media and its interactive opportunities have transformed some passive customers into active part-takers who are more willing to engage with companies (Dolan et al., 2016, Malthouse et al., 2013). This can appear as activities like creating brand-related content, helping to develop products and being advocates for a product or brand. Consumers also create value for the organization with their social media engagement actions, such as by reacting to posts and sharing them along (Dolan et al., 2016, Schivinski, Christodoulides & Dabrowski, 2016). Consumer engagement actions such as likes and comments can be seen as a metric to analyze the successfulness of social media marketing.

A greater audience on social media platforms also can make the organization's message spread wider. (Nelson-Field, Riebe & Sharp, 2012.)

Engaging with consumers online can create a sense of being connected and truly interactive. In many cases, this perception is not completely in line with reality. Reasons why consumers choose to engage with businesses is often because they want to personally benefit from it, for example in the form of receiving discounts or special information. Another factor that drives social media engagement is if consumers feel like the businesses' way of communicating is honest and transparent. Baird and Parasnis (2011) showed that there are misperceptions regarding the reasons behind interaction. Consumers most often listed their reasons to be discounts and purchasing, whereas businesses had listed these reasons at the bottom. Two other clear gaps were "feeling connected", listed by 64% of businesses but only 33% of consumers and "be a part of community", listed by 61% of businesses and 22% of consumers. The study shows that businesses did not have an accurate image of why consumers want to interact. (Baird & Parasnis, 2011.) This view has however been contradicted by Dolan et al. (2019), who found that product- and brand related content is found more appealing than sales-focused promotive content. Because there is almost 10 years between the studies, it might also imply that the reasons behind consumer engagement have changed over the years.

As consumers start to show more interest in engaging with organizations online, organizations must also stay active by monitoring the conversations around them and stimulating the activities consumers are engaging in (Schivinski et al., 2016). The content that is created in social media should be built to facilitate engagement to fully benefit from interactivity. Financial investments made in social media might be ineffective if marketers do not understand how to navigate the brand's content online. (Dolan et al., 2019.) When the organization appears to be present in social media and actively provides brand-related content, it allows the consumers to express engagement behavior, in positive cases leading to for example user-generated content and product reviews (Schivinski et al., 2016).

Social media engagement at best creates great value for both parties, the consumer and the organization, but can also create harmful situations for the brands (Dolan et al., 2019). Positive social media engagement has been a subject for more research, while negative engagement behavior has a stronger impact than positive. This happens because people often pay more attention to negative stimuli. As social media allows dissatisfied consumers to express their opinions quickly worldwide, the effects of negative engagement behavior must not be disregarded (Do, Rahman & Robinson, 2020). Negative customer engagement has been defined as customers thoughts and behaviors that are adverse for the brand and appear in interactions with the brand (Hollebeek & Chen, 2014), including disengagement and negative engagement (Do, Rahman & Robinson, 2020). Negative engagement behavior can appear in forms like negative product reviews or blog posts, but also in more discreet ways such as unfollowing the brand or terminating subscription (Dolan et al., 2019). This type of behavior might be caused by the feeling that the brand or service does not meet the expectations that the consumer had. The aim of negative engagement behavior

could therefore be to harm the brand's reputation or seek justice from a bad experience. (Do et al., 2020.)

TABLE 2 Social media engagement behavior (SMEB) construct (Dolan et al. 2016).

Label	Definition	Examples
Co-creation	Highly positive, creating brand-related content actively and un-prompted in social media	Publishing brand-related content such as articles, reviews and testimonials
Positive contribution	Moderately positive, making positive contributions to brand's content on their own pages	Reacting to posts, inviting friends to engage, rating brands
Consumption	Minimally positive, passively consuming brand-related content without responding or contributing	Viewing brand-related content
Dormancy	Inactive towards brand-related content, not positive nor negative effect	No engagement or response to brand-related content
Detachment	Minimally negative, terminating the relationship with brand-related content	Unfollowing content, terminating subscription
Negative contribution	Moderately negative, making negative contributions to brand's content on their own pages	Negative conversations about the brand online, negative rating of brand
Co-destruction	Highly negative, creating negative brand-related content actively and unprompted in social media	Writing complaints and negative reviews, reporting the brand, inviting others to "hate"

In the past years marketing research has had to develop a better understanding of how engagement behavior appears in social media. The table above presents a construct of social media engagement behavior. Dolan et al. (2016) defined different types of social engagement behavior, which include co-creation, positive contribution, consumption, dormancy, detachment, negative contribution and co-destruction. The construct explains the definitions and examples for each label. In a brand's view, the best types of social media engagement behaviors are positive and the least favorable is negative-valenced behavior. The table also describes intensity of the behavior in terms of high, moderate and minimal. (Dolan et al., 2016.)

3   EVENT EXPERIENCE

3.1   Event experience and perceived service quality

Along with products and services, experiences are seen to be an economic offering. In the experience economy, companies aim to find ways of engaging the consumer and leaving them with a memorable moment. Experiences can be categorized into four dimensions, entertainment, educational, esthetic and escapist and can involve different levels of participation. For example, buying tickets to see a breath-taking view while not actively participating, can be seen as an esthetic experience. (Pine & Gilmore, 1998.) Competitive sport event experiences are seen to be different from other event experiences because the structure of sports is distinguishable including features such as rules and venues. For the audience, behind the sport event experience can be for example a desire for entertainment and social outing. (Gets & Page, 2006.)

In marketing research, event experiences have been approached through the concept of perceived service quality (Getz & Page, 2006). In turn, also satisfaction in a sport event experience has been linked with perceived service quality. Perceived service quality is seen to have an impact on psychological and behavioural responses. Satisfaction in activities could lead to better health and improved satisfaction with life, thus contributing to general well-being and happiness. (Theodorakis, Kaplanidou & Karabaxoglou, 2015.) More specifically in the sport event context, service experience influences satisfaction levels because the participants spend a long period observing and creating the holistic experience of the event. Different attributes contribute to the overall satisfaction and excitement in the event. (Kelley & Turley, 2001.)

Service quality can be defined as the difference in what is expected from the service and what the customer perceives that they receive from the service. In a situation where the expectations and perceived reality are not in conflict, the customer will more likely view the service quality higher. (Chen et al., 2012.) In other words, perceived service quality is seen to consist of the combination of expected service and perceived service (Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry, 1985).

The concept of service quality is considered to be multidimensional, but there has been no complete consensus as to how many dimensions appear. Although there are multiple views on the amount of dimensions and determinants, the coherent notion seems to be that different factors affect how customers construe perceived service quality. For example, Grönroos (1984) developed a service quality model where image affects perceived service quality, and in turn factors affecting image are technical quality and functional quality. In this model, technical quality is described to be the outcome of a service, for example, a hotel room. Functional quality in turn describes the way that the outcome is received, as in how it happens. (Grönroos, 1984.) In turn, Parasuraman et al. (1985) introduced a service quality model with ten determinants. These determinants are presented in table 9 below. When

developing the service quality model, Parasuraman et al. (1985) noticed that despite the nature of the service, consumers evaluate the experience with similar criteria. They also found that some determinants were harder for the consumers to evaluate than others. For example, credibility and tangibles are determinants that the consumer can recognize before purchasing, but competence and security were harder to be certain of even after purchase.

TABLE 3 Determinants of service quality (Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry 1985).

Determinant	Explained
Reliability	Consistency of performance, dependability
Responsiveness	Willingness to provide service in a timely manner
Competence	Skills and knowledge in order to provide the service
Access	Easy approachability
Courtesy	Personnel is respectful and considerate towards customers
Communication	Keeping customers informed and listening to their needs
Credibility	Trustworthiness, honesty
Security	Confidentiality, physical and financial security
Understanding/knowing the customer	Understanding customer needs
Tangibles	Physical service (ie. facilities, equipment)

Further developing the original service quality model, Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1988) modified the dimensions from ten to five, in which three were originals and two combined multiple original dimensions. The new dimensions presented in the new model named SERVQUAL were reliability, responsiveness, tangibles, assurance and empathy. Whereas reliability, responsiveness and tangibles kept original definitions, assurance in the new model meant "knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to inspire trust and confidence" and for empathy "caring, individualized attention the firm provides its customers." (Parasuraman et al., 1988, 23). Although the SERVQUAL-model has been used as a tool to evaluate service quality and has somewhat reached an established position in service quality research, some critique has also inspired. The model has been criticized for example for not having enough items to capture variability within dimensions and that it shows lack of attention to the attitudinal aspects of service quality. (Buttle, 1996.)

3.1.1 Service quality in sport events

Service quality has also been a subject of study in the field of sport marketing, especially from visitors' perspective, and multiple scales have been developed. Kelley and Turley (2001) developed a scale to measure service quality in sport events. In their study, nine influencing factors were found: employees (ie. friendliness of personnel), price, facility access (ie. parking access), concessions (ie. food quality), fan comfort, game experience, showtime, convenience and smoking. The results of this study showed that for event organizers in the sport event context service quality is more difficult to control than in some other settings. This is because the attribute that affected perceived service quality the most was the actual game experience. This also implies that sport event organizers should pay even more attention to the service quality determinants that they can control. This allows to provide a positive experience even when the actual sport performance is a disappointment. It must however be reminded that the sample in their study consisted of adults, and children or adolescents might have differing views. (Kelley & Turley, 2001.)

In a more recent study, Yoshida and James (2011) found a seven-factor model to demonstrate service quality at a sport event. The influencing factors were game atmosphere, crowd experience, opponent characteristics (ie. quality and history of the opponent team), player performance, frontline employees (ie. willingness to help, responsiveness), facility access (ie. signs and directions at the stadium) and seat space (ie. comfortability). In their study, Yoshida and James (2011) also presented aesthetic quality as an attribute in events. When defining aesthetic quality, two characteristics of a service experience emerge: customer participation and environmental relationship. Customer participation sees customers as co-producers of the experience and aims to involve them in the creation, whereas environmental relationship describes the service environment through sights, sounds, smells, and atmosphere (Yoshida & James, 2011). Environmental relationship is seen to be the factor that unites the customer into the experience (Pine & Gilmore, 1998). In the scale, game atmosphere and crowd experience were the factors that had strongest loadings on aesthetic quality but could also be seen in for example facility access (ie. signs and layout) (Yoshida & James, 2011).

A third view to service quality in sport events is provided by Theodorakis et al. (2001) who based their model on five dimensions: access, reliability, responsiveness, tangibles and security. Theodorakis et al. (2001) also noted that because sport marketers cannot affect the core product, the actual game experience, they should focus on the extensions such as food and beverages, hospitality and entertainment. This can increase customer satisfaction in the event and thus lead to positive word-of-mouth and loyalty.

TABLE 4 Different determinants of service quality in sport events

Authors	Determinants of service quality
Kelley & Turley (2001)	Employees
	Price
	Facility access
	Concessions
	Fan comfort
	Game experience
	Showtime
	Convenience
	Smoking
Yoshida & James (2011)	Game atmosphere
	Crowd experience
	Opponent characteristics
	Player performance
	Frontline employees
	Facility access
	Seat space
Theodorakis et al. (2001)	Access
	Reliability
	Responsiveness
	Tangibles
	Security

Nowadays experiential consumption is an ever-growing area of interest. The experience industry is not a new function but has not always been so popular. One of the pioneering studies on experiential consumption was by Holbrook and Hirschman (1982). They stated that the consumption experience is more than merely buying a certain product. Pine and Gilmore (1998) stated that experiences should be seen to differ from services and goods, as it is a distinct offering. Services and goods can be seen as additions to the actual experience, and they can create revenue. To design a memorable experience, they found five principles: create a theme, make positive impressions on customers and eliminate negative reminders, offer memorabilia and engage all of the five human senses. (Pine & Gilmore, 1998.)

Successful events and positive experiences can create not only great revenue, but also the host country could receive cultural and social benefits. Satisfaction of the participants can lead to long-term benefits for the host in the form of positive word-of-mouth and possibility for revisits, thus benefiting the tourism economy. (Pettersson & Getz, 2009.) Sport events and the tourism related to them therefore have an impact on the tourism development in event destinations, affecting destination's image and revenue (Kaplanidou, Kerwin & Karadakis, 2013). A destination's image is seen to consist of functional (tangible) and psychological (intangible) attributes. A positive image can also influence

perceived service quality and satisfaction. (Shonk & Chelladurai, 2008.) When analyzing experiences, it must be noticed that they cannot be fully controlled, because after all, people construe experiences based on personal, social and cultural views (Pettersson & Getz, 2009).

3.2   Factors affecting participant's event experience

3.2.1 Stressors in general

Athletes in sport events have a unique role, as they are primary stakeholders. Without their output, there would not be work for the event producers nor spectators. They also represent the sport that they compete in and communicate with other event stakeholders such as coaches, volunteers, fans and staff. It must be kept in mind that athletes face many challenges in sport events that are not only connected to the actual sport performance. (MacIntosh & Dill, 2017, 125) The athlete perspective is also important, because athletes can create value to the brand or in the contrary create a negative impact to the brand (Parent, MacIntosh & Kristiansen, 2014).

Younger athletes might also have different needs than adults (MacIntosh & Dill, 2017, 136). Older athletes are also often more developed in controlling their negative emotions under stressful situations, better prepared to adjust to difficulties and can concentrate better (Kristiansen & Roberts, 2010). Another factor that should be kept in mind are the stressors that the athletes experience during the event. In former research such as Greenleaf, Gould and Dieffenbach (2001) and Hanton, Fletcher and Coughlan (2005), the stressors are defined as competitive and organizational stressors.

Hanton, Fletcher and Coughlan (2005) define competitive stressors to be related to the actual performance in a sport. When studying EYOF participants in 2007 competitions, Kristiansen and Roberts (2010) discovered examples of competitive stressors that the participants mentioned, including the presence of audience, pressure to perform, lack of routines or a high level of the other competitors. On the other hand, organizational stressors occur in the interaction between the athlete and the sport organization (Hanton, Fletcher & Coughlan, 2005). In EYOF2007, these were discovered to be for example shortcomings in accommodation or food supply, lack of access to communicate with coaches and difficulties in adjusting to the climate or time schedules. Participants coped with the stressors with social support, cognitive strategies (e.g. refocusing, visualization), routines and preparations and tangible elements such as providing cold water to help deal with hot climate. (Kristiansen & Roberts, 2010.)

3.2.2 Social media for athletes

Social media is one of the modern-day factors that athletes deal with. Increased transparency and visibility are challenges but also opportunities, which social media brings along. It also affects the event organizers and the event brand, as

event experiences can be shared easily. (MacIntosh & Dill, 2017, 132). Social media is often used as a tool of marketing communication to build an image of a brand online. This does not only apply to companies, but also people can build their own personal brands. This is something that especially professional athletes are expected to do nowadays. (Geurin, 2017). Brand is something that can differentiate itself from competition. Athletes can be perceived as brands because they have individual personalities, names, and physical appearances. It has however been discussed that athlete brands can only be found in professional athletes with greater contracts. (Arai, Ko & Ross, 2013.) This is somewhat a matter of opinion of how people view brands.

Maintaining their presence and personal brand of social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter allows the athletes to engage with stakeholders and fans, therefore creating stronger relationships with them (Geurin, 2017). Creating and maintaining personal brand on social media platforms is however a time-consuming commitment that also affects the athletes sport-related activities like training and competing. An appealing personal brand could however offer new possibilities in marketing rather than just being dependent on occasional sponsorships. (Geurin, 2017, Arai et al., 2013.) The rise of social media has led to the realization that organizations are not able to fully shape their brands themselves (Getz & Page, 2016, 79). In order to answer nowadays changing environment, some sports organizations have established social media rules for the participants to follow (MacIntosh & Dill, 2017, 133). For example, The European Olympic Committee ("EOC") published guidelines for accredited persons in the Minsk 2019 European Games. According to these guidelines, accredited persons could publish still photographs on social media for personal, non-commercial and non-promotional use, but publishing audio and video content from areas of competition or non-public areas on social media was prohibited (with some exceptions of for example ceremonies). The guidelines also stated that public social media content should be "consistent with the Olympic values of excellence, respect and friendship". (The European Games, 2019.)

3.2.3 Event experience for athletes

As mentioned before, an athlete's experience reaches other dimensions from what is visible to the other participants, as they are impacted by all of the conditions of the event. The role of athletes as stakeholders is also important, because if they are not comfortable with the conditions in the event, it might affect their enthusiasm towards the event. This could lead to negative word-of-mouth, creating disadvantage to the event's brand image. Dissatisfaction towards the conditions can even cause underperforming in the competition. Although the event experience cannot be fully controlled by the organizers, some factors can be altered to best please the athletes' needs. (MacIntosh & Nicol, 2012.)

TABLE 5 Athletes' event experience factors (MacIntosh & Nicol, 2012).

Factor	Examples

Transportation	Travels to location, transportation in the event, ease of transportation
Security	Village and venue security, their presence, confidence in them
Medical	Anti-doping, confidence in staff and handling accidents
Accommodations	Rooms, housekeeping, village
Sport venues	Facilities for performances, training venue, overall environment of the venue
Ancillary areas	Free-time activities available, use of internet, nutrition and food availability
Communication	Team leaders, press operations, possibility of contacting others, functioning wireless technology, athlete handbook of information
Ceremonies	Cultural welcome, opening - and medal ceremonies
Overall experience	The full experience, family and friends, overall satisfaction

MacIntosh and Nicol (2012) state that an athlete's sport event experience consists of nine factors (table 10). These factors are transportation, security, medical, accommodations, sport venues, ancillary areas, communication, ceremonies and overall experience. As it can be seen in comparison with perceived service quality, the models contain many of the same features. This implies that although the athletes and rest of the participants have slightly different aspects in the event, some of the features on how the experience is constructed remain similar. Thus, in this study analyzing event experience, both sides, perceived service quality elements and athlete's experience elements are noticed and utilized.

3.3   Research model

To conclude the literature review, a research model of this study is presented. The research objective is to contribute to the gap in research between the three mediating factors: social media, event experience and this specific target group. In this chapter the themes along with main explaining literature are presented. In addition to the main literature, additive sources are also used to explain more specific factors.

Social media is addressed with three main themes, engagement behavior, platforms and user's reasoning to use social media. For engagement behavior, the main literature consists of Dolan et al. (2016), Dolan et al. (2019), Schivinski et al. (2016), and Baird and Parasnis (2011), along with other supportive studies. For social media user's reasoning, the main literature is by Whiting and Williams (2013), Brailovskaia et al. (2020) and Nadkarni and Hofmann (2012). The

platforms in turn give some background to the usage habits, and are explained with recent reports by for example HubSpot, Forrester and Statista Research Department.

Event experience in turn is explained with two concepts: perceived service quality and sport event experience in particular as it has special characteristics. For perceived service quality, the main literature consists of Parasuraman et al. (1985, 1988), Kelley and Turley (2001), Yoshida and James (2011) and Theodorakis et al. (2001). For sport event experience in particular, literature involves MacIntosh and Nicol (2012), Geurin (2017) and Arai et al. (2013). Finally, the target group and context in which the study is performed offers background to the study. With these, a more specific framework for the study can be identified.
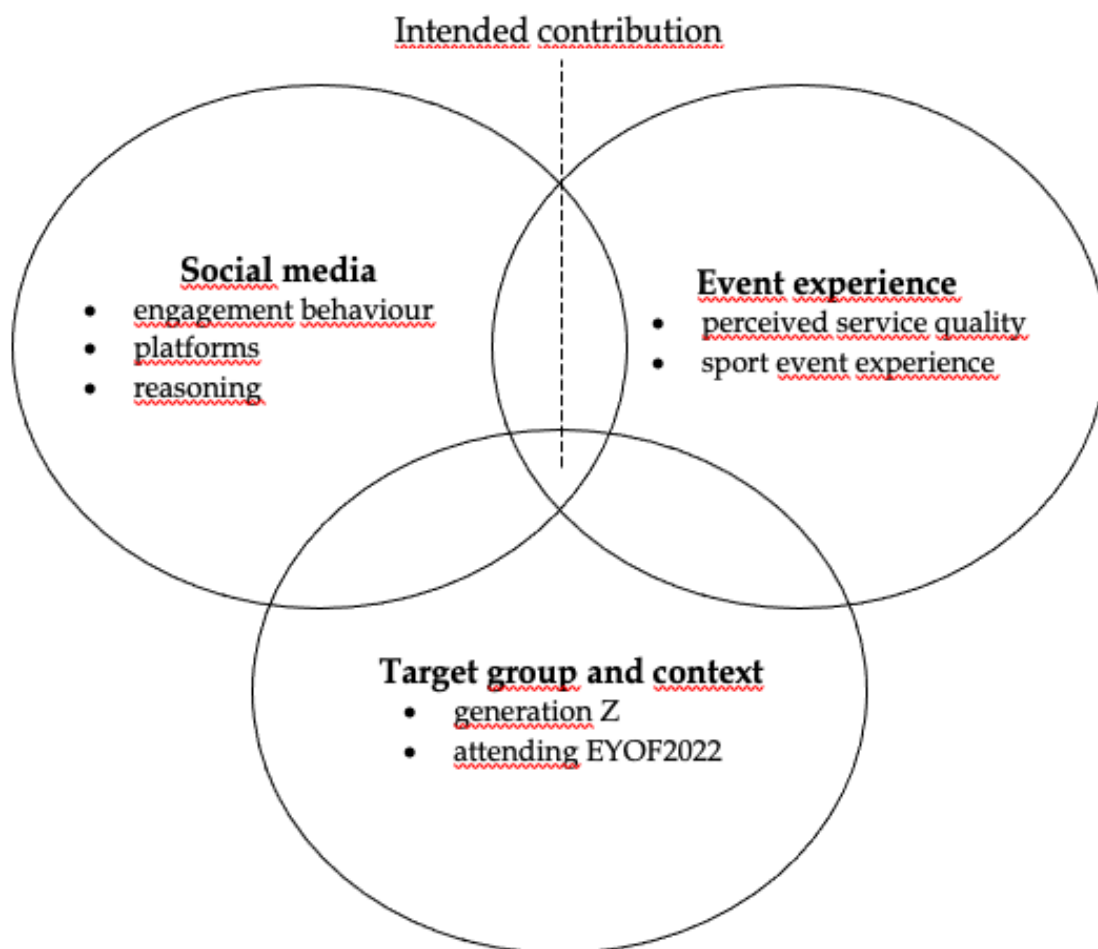

FIGURE 7 Research model

4   METHODOLOGY

4.1   Qualitative research approach

This study was conducted with a qualitative research approach. Research approaches can be divided into two categories, qualitative and quantitative. The differences between qualitative and quantitative methodologies are a subject of constant discussion. Therefore a strict bifurcation between these two methods might not be justifiable. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2015.) However, one often explained view is that qualitative approach is seen to take social and cultural constructs better into consideration than quantitative research approach, which is more based on analyzing statistics and hypotheses. In contrast, a quantitative approach aims to holistically understand the subject in question. It might be a better choice of approach when the subject of matter is unstructured and more explanation and information is needed. (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008, Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2015.)

4.2   Data collection

As mentioned, the data was collected through interviews. To attend the interviews, there were a few requirements for the participants. The interviewees were required to have participated in EYOF in some role (athlete, volunteer or organizer in the event), able to communicate in Finnish or English and aged in between 14-25 years, as this age group is seen to represent generation Z. Recruiting the interviewees was done by the organizing party, VuokattiSport. Information about the research interviews was spread through flyers, email and social media.

Recruiting the interviewees had some challenges, because of the tight schedule of the competitions and COVID-19- restrictions, as the recruiting could not be done in physical interactions. Despite the challenges, there were in total eight interviews, of which four were volunteering workers, three athletes and one event organizer from VuokattiSport. The participants informed a contact person from VuokattiSport about their interest to attend the interview, and their contact information was provided and interview times set up. The interviews were held 22.3.-5.4., while the event was held 20-25.3.2022. Arranging the interviews close to the event meant that the event experience was still fresh in mind for the participants. Each participant was interviewed once. In advance, they received research notification, privacy notice, consent form and research notification for guardians. Underage participants were asked to forward the latter to their guardians. The interviews were then conducted in Zoom, making the interaction COVID19-safe and easy to access. All of the participants agreed

to recording the interviews, and straight afterwards the voice recordings were transcribed precisely from word to word.

The general structure of the interviews is shown in appendix 1. As the objective was to create a casual atmosphere where participants would be comfortable to share their views freely, the structure was built to offer some support to the conversations. The interviews involved two main themes, social media and event experience. Questions were formed in a way where the answers would be broader than merely a yes or no.

The average age of the interviewees was 18 years. One of the interviews was with the event organizing party, VuokattiSport. This interview was conducted to learn about their social media strategy and thoughts on the research subjects. The length of the interviews varied from 16-29 minutes and the average length of an interview was 19 minutes.

TABLE 6 List of interviews.

Interviewee	Age & gender	Role	Length
I1	16, male	Volunteer	17 min
I2	17, female	Volunteer	16 min
I3	25, female	Volunteer	20 min
I4	18, female	Volunteer	15 min
I5	18, female	Athlete	20 min
I6	18, male	Athlete	17 min
I7	19, female	Athlete	19 min
I8	X, female	Event organizer	29 min

Because some of the respondents were underaged, the study went through a process of ethical review. The review process included evaluation of research plan, ethical assessment, data management plan, privacy notice, information sheet, consent form and material given to the participants. The study received an approving statement from the Human Sciences Ethics Committee of the University of Jyväskylä on 2.3.2022.

4.2.1 Theme interviews

The empirical data in this study is gathered with theme interviews. Interviews as a data collection method in general has its pros and cons, as all methods do. The advantages of an interview are for example that the subjects of study are an active participant who can provide in-depth information and meanings from their own point-of-view. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2015, Eskola & Suoranta, 1998.) If the subject of matter is not very well known and thus answers cannot be predicted, interviews are often a better way to approach the subject (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2015).

The disadvantages of interviews as a data collection method are related to practical and social constructs. Interviews themselves and the transcription afterwards are seen to be time-consuming and because interviews are based on social interaction, the interviewer's skills and preparation make a great

difference. Interviews might not provide accurate data, if the questions are leading or the interviewee wants to present themselves in a certain way. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2015.) It is important that the interviewee is successful in creating a confidential atmosphere (Eskola & Suoranta, 1998). Interviews compared to questionnaire forms are also considered to be better in a sense that questionnaires can be hard to understand and respond to even for educated adults (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2015). Because the subjects of study in this research are adolescent, there could be an increased risk in using a questionnaire form, as the questions might be interpreted in a different way than intended thus providing inaccurate data.

Theme interviews are of semi-structured nature. In a guided, semi-structured interview the topics are set in advance by the interviewer, but the wording or order in which the questions are presented may vary. (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008, Eskola & Suoranta, 1998.) This allows the communication in the situation to be more free-natured and could advance mutual understanding. However, risks in a semi-structured interview are that the answers are irrelevant to the study and certain topics might be left uncovered. It requires skills from the interviewer to receive in-depth answers. (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008.)

In the case of this target group, mutual understanding of each other and a clear vision of the topics is important. Natural communication could result in more successful interviews, as the adolescents might not be used to a formal interview situation. Hirsjärvi and Hurme (2015) state that youths might be harder to motivate to answer the interview questions, as it is common that they want to be separated from the adult world. Convincing the young interviewees that they are interesting and important to the research, could help motivate them. In this research, this was paid attention to from the first contact: the interviewees were made known that their answers are very valuable information and that they can express their thoughts freely, as there are no wrong answers.

4.3   Data analysis

After the interviews were transcribed, the next stage was analyzing the results carefully. The raw interview data was divided into themes. When thematizing the results, reduction and clustering were used. In reduction, certain themes and expressions are highlighted from the original data. With clustering, they are divided under different themes. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2018.) This helps the researcher in finding relevant expressions from the raw data.

After the interviews were thematized, the results were reported using direct quotes from the participants to ensure the authenticity of expressions. In this research, the results are presented by themes. The results were afterwards analyzed and concluded based on the theoretical background presented before. The key objectives in the analysis were to compare the results with previous research and find new aspects to the matter. The research process, results and analysis were also discussed in a workshop with the case organization, VuokattiSport.

4.4   Case EYOF2022

European Youth Olympic Festival (later EYOF) is a youth competition brand by the European Olympic Committee. It was first presented in 1991 and was originally called European Youth Olympic Days. EYOF is the biggest multi-sport event for young (aged 14-18) athletes in Europe and aims to not only host competitions, but also to educate the athletes about Olympic principles and to give motivation for sports and physical activity. The main principles that EYOF mentions in their website are friendship, fair play and tolerance. Although the competitions are the main point in the event, EYOF offers the athletes chances to meet and befriend the other participants. In 2022 EYOF was held in Vuokatti, Finland. The organizing party of this event was along with EYOF, VuokattiSport. (EYOF, 2022).

EYOF2022 Vuokatti-event also claims to take responsibility in environmental sustainability matters, as the mass event has effects on natural resources and emissions in the host region, Kainuu. The organizers have agreed to facilitate sustainability by for example encouraging recycling and vegetarian food, favouring local producers and avoiding paper waste with a mobile application. (EYOF2022 Vuokatti, 2022). Taking the environmental aspect along with other aspects, social, political and economic, into consideration in event management helps organizers to maximize event benefits and minimize the negative impacts, creating a more successful event for all stakeholders (Holmes et al., 2015).

As the event was held in VuokattiSport, they played a major role as the organizer. Therefore, this study is focused on VuokattiSport's social media channels and media habits. EYOF is an umbrella organization for all of the Youth Olympic Festival events, whereas VuokattiSport's main objective at this time was specifically the 2022 event. VuokattiSport could also offer more local and detailed information concerning the 2022 event.

5   RESULTS

The results of this study are presented in this chapter. They are divided under subheadings by theme. In this section, the participants' views on the matter are presented thoroughly using direct quotes from the interview data.

5.1   Reasons to use social media

The participants were asked to reflect on the reasons why they use social media or want to be involved in it. Vast amount of the respondents listed entertainment as the main reason. They also mentioned that social media was being used to pass time in dull moments or free time. In this study, these reasons were mentioned by five out of eight respondents, making them the most common. The respondents felt like social media offers entertainment to spend spare time, and that boring moments were the best times to use social media. Some were not able to clearly specify the reason behind the use, but their answers were related to passing time or finding some entertaining content.

> ″ I don't think there's any specific reason. Maybe sometimes it is just that I'm bored so I spend time there and use social media.″ H2

> ″ It's just entertainment for dull moments.″ H1

> ″ …sometimes you just pretty much spend time there.″ H4

> ″ Sometimes you just want to watch something in social media.″ H7

A second reason that was often mentioned by three out of eight respondents was interaction with friends and keeping in contact with them. In this study, the respondents expressed that social media made it easy to maintain relationships with friends, and ease of communication was often mentioned within the interviews. With this, it can be said that social media was also seen to be a utility for communicating.

The majority, five of the participants also mentioned that they use social media, because they are interested in what other people are posting. It was also mentioned, that not using social media could lead to a fear of missing out, because their friends use it. The respondents also reported that they like to keep up with other people's activities and perform a level of surveillance on that part.

> ″ …and you can easily keep up with relationships and talk through social media with your friends.″ H6

> ″ I think I'm just interested to see what other people and friends like to do.″ H4

> ″ When my friends post something, I can keep up with their lifes.″ H7

38

" I think pretty much because everyone else uses it also, so if I didn't, I would feel like I'm missing out on a lot of things." H6

"On Instagram there's of course other athletes, so their posts are quite interesting to me." H6

The fourth reason that was mentioned by multiple respondents was self-presentation and sharing information about yourself. The respondents described social media accounts to be a diary for them, and that it allowed them to go back on old memories. In these answers, the main reason was not particularly interactive but rather doing social media activities for themselves.

" I mean for me it is kind of like writing my own diary." H3

" …so yeah, it is pretty much just keeping a journal in there and it is fun to look at it later." H3

" Or then if you just want to share some things in there. It is both, entertainment and self-expression." H2

It was also brought up that social media is being used as a tool to build one's own brand as a young athlete and to receive visibility online. Acquiring visibility in social media was seen to be of importance in sports, because it allows sponsors and partners to be found. Visibility in turn was seen to increase conspicuousness and therefore increase people's overall interest in the athlete's career.

"Well. Probably because you get visibility from it. And visibility is the most important in sports, so you can get supporters and partners. And the more people recognize you or recognizes your name, the more they are interested in how you're doing and are ready to support you."H5

" Also because with social media you can get visibility as an athlete and so forth."H7

Using social media for informative purposes, such as seeking information about events or businesses was mentioned directly by two respondents. The answers showed that they use social media to find out how other athletes have performed in the event and to find live results.

"… although I browse Safari and other informative stuff more, because of results and everything, but otherwise it's pretty much the same." H4

" Take for example Instagram, from there I follow friends or sports clubs, or say results from a game or something." H1

From the event organizer's point of view, the reason to do social media marketing was to increase visibility. The main objective of receiving visibility was to increase awareness of VuokattiSport's offering as a sports venue. The reason why the umbrella organization, European Youth Olympic Games also promoted Vuokatti in their social media accounts was similar, to gain visibility and "put it on the map".

"For the EYOF organization it was to put Vuokatti on the map and personally for us, Vuokatti Sport's social media, we wanted, that because

Vuokatti Sport is the mainstage for all these sports, we are interested in getting people here for camps, for example hockey teams or figure skating or short track, which is a whole new sport. So these were those for us, it was this kind of a clear business view." H8
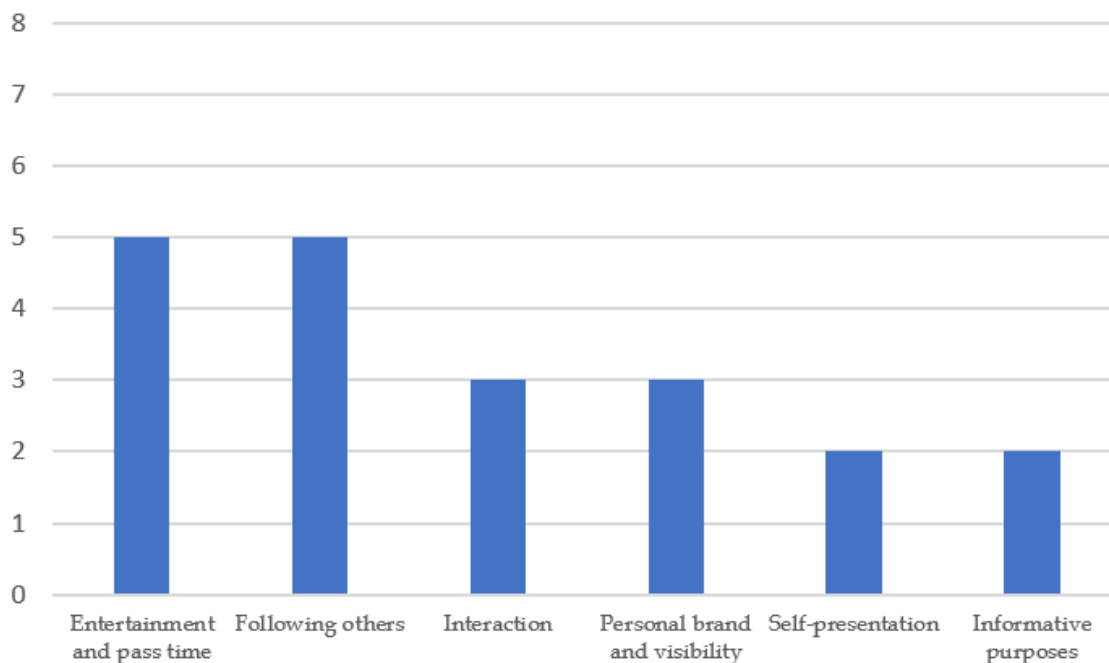
FIGURE 8 Summary of reasons to use social media mentioned by number of respondents.

The figure shown above summarizes the reasons of social media use. It shows the number of respondents that mentioned a specific reason compared to the total amount of respondents.

5.2 Social media platforms

The participants were asked to list three social media platforms that they use the most. The platforms that were mentioned were Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok, Facebook, YouTube and Strava. Whereas other platforms were introduced earlier in the theoretical background section, Strava was left unpresented. Originally launched in 2009, Strava is a fitness-tracking app, in which the user can save the data from their sport performances. The users can also network with other users and for example comment on their performances and befriend them. (Delfino, 2020.) In 2021 Strava had 76 million users worldwide and is reportedly adding by million users per month (Curry, 2022).

The table below presents the platforms along with the percentage of respondents that mentioned them in their top three. Instagram was mentioned by all the respondents and the next most popular ones were Snapchat and TikTok. This is in line with eMarketer's report from 2021, which described these three to be generation Z's preferred platforms.

TABLE 7 Social media platforms mentioned by respondents

Social media platform	% of respondents listed (number in parentheses)
Instagram	100% (8)
Snapchat	75% (6)
TikTok	50% (4)
Facebook	38% (3)
YouTube	13% (1)
Strava	13% (1)

The respondents were also asked to state the reasons why they chose their preferred platforms. Instagram was seen to be the best, because of two main reasons. First was that it was seen to offer efficient visibility, because it has users from different age groups, both young and old. In turn, Facebook was seen to have older audience and therefore it was not seen to be the most useful when trying to reach younger audience. Another factor that made respondents prefer Instagram was its easiness of use. It was found positive that long posts and texts are not typical for Instagram, and the content is mainly in photo or video form.

> ″ Instagram is easy and simple like that: you get straight to the point, no need to go around. You can see a lot through pictures, you don't necessarily have to read any texts, you can immediately see the purpose of the post from the picture." H6

> ″ Yeah well, I would probably consider Instagram on the first place, because there's like young people in the center but older folks too. The age range is so wide. And secondly Facebook, you find kind of everybody in there, but more older folks." H1

> "Yeah, I feel like Instagram can reach a lot of people." H2

Another platform that respondents felt could offer Instagram type of visibility was TikTok. TikTok's algorithm was found to be useful, as it shows all sorts of content for all users. The respondents thought TikTok could therefore engage people who do not normally pay attention to the sport in question.

> ″ In my opinion Instagram is at least good, and there could also be TikTok too. In there you can get visibility better from those kinds of people who don't pay attention to skiing or other winter sports in there it might more easily be seen by those people." H3

> "Well, the best ones are for sure Instagram and TikTok, so many young people have stopped using Facebook. Facebook has sort of older people, Instagram and TikTok are being used to much that they must offer the best visibility." H5

In turn, Snapchat's advantage was the possibility to easily reach out to and communicate with others. The difference with Instagram and Snapchat was that Snapchat was seen to be a platform for more open communication whereas Instagram was described as a platform to showcase athlete's life and interact with stakeholders.

> " Well Snapchat is handy because you can easily reach friends through it. As an athlete, I use Instagram because my sponsors and those who are interested in how I'm doing are there. On Instagram I can share more content related to sports and practicing, and other things in my life." H5

> " On Instagram, I share my own life and promote my sponsors. Then on Snapchat, it's more like just for messaging friends." H7

> " Maybe on Snapchat, when you're with friends, it's a smaller audience and you can share more entertaining content, but on Instagram where more people will see it, it is more factual and appropriate." H5

VuokattiSport reported to have used mainly Facebook and Instagram for social media marketing. They chose these platforms, because they had already gained some followers there and thus felt like it was the most familiar option. The organizer also mentioned that these were chosen because they already knew how to use them. TikTok was not utilized as much, because it was not as well-known as the other platforms and the interviewee felt like younger users might feel more comfortable with it.

> " We had only Facebook and Instagram. We did the posts on Instagram and they went automatically on Facebook too. So those two we had in use plus we have a TikTok account open, but it only has 2-3 videos."H8

> "It was a familiar, safe choice. There we have the most followers. We have a YouTube for VuokattiSport, but it's still in its infancy, also EYOF had there only the videos and songs and such. TikTok is not familiar to us, maybe I'm too old for that." H8

5.3 General social media habits

First, the participants were asked to freely describe their general social media use habits so that they could express their thoughts without answering any specific question. Along with listing the platforms that they prefer to use, many respondents mentioned the frequency of social media use. Five out of eight respondents discussed that they use social media every day for multiple hours. Many also mentioned in this context that they feel like they use a lot of social media and that it has almost become a necessary part of their day. It also came up that as an athlete, active updates on social media can be obligatory in order to stay in contact with sponsors. Frequent social media use is not uncommon with adolescents. On average they are reported to use three social media platforms daily, spending approximately three hours per day online (Vannucci et al., 2020).

"I do use social media every day and it sort of feels like it's a part of my day. When you take the phone in your hand, you easily start to scroll through social media. It does end up taking several hours." H2

"I mean, of course social media is used a lot, when you think about Snapchat and Instagram for example, they are very popular amongst young people. I use them daily too."H6

"I feel like I use social media a lot, many hours a day. I would estimate about three."H4

"I update my own social media accounts actively. As an athlete, you have certain sponsor things that obligate, but you also gain from them. Social media is also sort of a little job for me. So yeah, actively."H3

To follow up on this, the participants were asked if they like to produce their own content or follow other people's content on social media. To this question there were no black-or-white answers, as all respondents shared that they follow others, but also want to make some of their own content. Four respondents however leaned towards following other people's content more, whereas one respondent shared that they produce more own content, as it already takes a lot of time.

"I have done some posting, but not that much. I think I like more to follow others." H2

"Pretty much I just follow others. Of course you somewhat post on Instagram, but its more about following." H6

"I like to update my own Instagram but also follow others online." H4

"It has pretty much gone to a point where time is not on my side, and there's no time to follow other than some specific friends, mostly close ones who's posts I see. And of course some paid collaborations and other stuff in between. But more time goes into me posting material than in following others." H3

5.4   Social media use during EYOF

One of the themes that were discussed in the interviews was the participant's social media use during EYOF. The respondents were asked to compare their usual social media habits to the use while they are attending the event. Five out of seven of the volunteer and athlete respondents shared that the use of social media and posting in it had an increase during the event. The reasons for this increase were explained by mainly two points. Some respondents reasoned that posts related to the event in social media allow them to be more involved and aware of what happens in the event, and that they can look at the event from a different perspective, in this case an athlete from another discipline or country. One respondent also explained that befriending other athletes from the event affected their social media use by increasing the time spent there talking to new acquaintances.

> "On top of my normal use, I also watch Vuokatti Academy's and Vuokatti Sport's and others Instagram stories and posts from these competitions, so that I'm aware of what happens. What I can't see from the venue, I can see the rest from there." H1

> "The event does affect the usage because there's so many posts of the event in question and you can see it through other people's eyes. Especially on Instagram you can see a lot from other disciplines and athletes from other countries, so you can follow the event from their point of view." H6

> "The amount of use is pretty much the same, but in some ways maybe a bit more because you get to know new people in for example Snapchat, so when you get new friends from other countries, you spend time talking to them of course." H6

Another reason for increased social media use was that the competitions were a great place for the participant to produce content and update their social media accounts. One respondent also mentioned that some sponsors might require the athletes to promote their brand on social media, thus affecting the individual's time spent on social media platforms.

> " Well I think I use social media a bit more because I update Instagram more. But I use other platforms maybe less because I'm more focused on Instagram." H2

> "I don't see a big difference, but when there's competitions and opening ceremonies and such, they are good places to share content from. During the competitions, when it's a big event, there is more of what you can produce content from. Many people are interested in what happens here during the competitions, so I publish more posts than during normal weekdays. Some sponsors also obligate that you must bring up, for example in skiing a ski brand or ski pole brand, their brand in social media. "H5

On the contrary, one of the respondents acknowledged that her personal social media use was left on the hold, because she participated in the event as a part of media team, who was in charge of updating the event organizer's social media. She also added that the usage was different from normal because she had to pay more attention to the posts that they publish, rather than just self-expressing freely.

> "Actually, I use my own social media less because of my job description, updating Vuokatti Sport's social media channels, I don't put as much effort in my own social medias, so they are left with less attention. Obviously when you update a businesses or other people's social media, it's different compared to my own ones. On my own social media, I don't pay as much attention to if there's for example spelling mistakes or whatever. You watch much more closely that everything is perfect." H3

As a summary, the reasons for increased social media use during the event consisted of the following.

- Feeling more involved and aware
- Looking at the event from a different perspective

- Connecting with new acquaintances
- Producing content and updating own accounts

5.5   Following EYOF in social media

In the interviews, one of the topics that were discussed was the relationship that the respondents had with the event organizer in social media. This included features such as if they followed the event in some form, what type of engagement they have and what kind of content they would wish to see posted on the event organizer's social media accounts.

The type of content that the respondents wished to see on social media was not any specific type, but rather a combination of different sorts. None of the respondents wanted to see only entertaining content, but a vast part of answers explained that they wish to see some official information, such as results. Entertaining content was seen to be "lighter" compared to informational, and the lack of it could make the social media account too formal and therefore stiff. It was also noted that events should utilize their websites for information about instructions and such, so that the social media accounts are not filled with that.

> "If it is possible, a mix of both, entertainment and information. It is good to have both, that makes a great social media account, if you can say that. Having both makes it good one." H1

> "It shouldn't be only information, rather so that there is also something lighter." H2

> "Entertaining content and official, results and such in appropriate proportions. They should be in a balance, so that there isn't too much of the official information, so that it doesn't become stiff. Also usually these types of big events have websites where you can find more specific instructions, related to health and safety and corona and things like that, so I don't think those should be highlighted too much in social media, but they can be mentioned." H3

Some of the respondents' answers leaned more towards wanting informational content. They were interested to see a broader view of the different sports that were competed in. The type of content that was wished to see in social media was the event location and the different places for competitions, reports on what is currently happening, material from the competition and interviews of the athletes. It was also noted that the event location could be presented in social media before the event, so that the athletes and other participants could be more prepared.

> "I wanna see the different sports, more than entertainment I'm interested in seeing what happens and other stuff about all the sports. More of that." H4

> "During the competitions I want to see what happens, see the places. Here, where there's many different sports, the places and other material from the different competitions. Then for example some short interviews

from athletes. Before the competitions I think it's good that some places are shown in advance, to see what there is. "H5

From VuokattiSport's point of view, the main objective of the content that was published was to promote Vuokatti as a sports venue. Some of the social media content producing was given to students at Vuokatti, and one of the objectives of the content was also to give them some experience on being a sports reporter. The interviewee also mentioned that they wanted social media to act as a channel for results and interviews, which can be seen to be more informational content than entertaining.

> "For VuokattiSport, we wanted it to be a channel for results also, and then interviewing these young people in Finnish and English. Also the students who did this, a student group, got experience on daring to ask strangers questions. And they also had to keep up with the competitions, so that they could prepare the interview. So more of a channel for results. And presenting the athletes."H8

Almost all volunteer and athlete respondents, six out of seven had followed the EYOF event in social media from some channel. The respondents were asked to make some notions of their social media engagement behavior, for example how they interact with businesses online and what could positively increase their engagement. Three participants mentioned that they mostly like the posts when they see them. One participant noted that they would share brand-related posts along with their friends, if they thought that the brand was considerably good and had something that they would want. When asked what could make people more engaged with the brand, it was mentioned that something from which people could possibly benefit from, such as a raffle, would be a good incentive for users to be more interactive.

> "When I'm browsing, I usually just like the post, it could be anything. I don't leave comments or anything else, just a like." H1

> "If the post is interesting, I like them, but more of just watching from the sidelines." H4

> "I usually just like. If there was a brand or something, I could share to my friend if they have some neat things that I want." H5

> "Probably a raffle could make people more engaged. I feel like you could better get people on board if there was some kind of bait to it." H2

One of the respondents had not actually clicked the "follow" button on Instagram, but still wanted to check up on the updates from the event. The respondent felt that the account was updated so much that it became sort of a clutter of information.

> "I didn't follow EYOF. But in fact, I did at times go check what there is to see. There was so much content put out that I didn't feel like officially following it."H7

Some of the participants had done some collaborations with the organizer to produce content or promote the event in their own personal accounts and a few

of the respondents mentioned, that they had been included in a media team that handled VuokattiSport's account during the event to post updates. In this study, the participants who had worked with the organizer's social media accounts also mentioned that they followed the event on their personal accounts. Whereas both respondents who had worked with the organizer's social medias acknowledged how they engage with users on professional accounts, one respondent felt like they do not actually pay attention to the matter on their personal social media, and the other told that they try to engage with businesses also personally.

> "When you think about it, doing social media for VuokattiSport, I use a lot of tagging people and stuff like that. But personally doing social media, I don't really pay attention to that kind of things."H2

> "Updating VuokattiSport's social media, there's of course interaction with businesses. Also when posting on my own social media accounts, I do tag for example EYOF, Hiihtoliitto and other officials." H3

5.6   The role of social media in sport events

The next big theme of the interviews was the role of social media in sport events, more specifically in EYOF2022. All of the respondents considered the role to be substantial in today's world. The reasons for this somewhat varied, but the majority of the reasons fell into two categories: visibility and awareness and atmosphere and sense of communality. The table 8 below summarizes the examples given to both categories.

TABLE 8 Summary of the role of social media

Category	Examples mentioned
Visibility and awareness	Recognizing young athletes
	Awareness of the event
	Ability to follow the event remotely
	Social media is commonly used among the target group
	Attracting audience
	Following results and other information
Sense of communality and atmosphere	Inspiring excitement and hype
	Attending special moments (eg. opening ceremony)
	Inspiring positive on-site atmosphere
	Positive affect on atmosphere helps athletes perform
	Interacting with other participants

First of all, visibility was seen to be key objectives of social media marketing for this event. With visibility, the young athletes could gain a bigger audience to

follow their careers and therefore get sponsors and other supporters. This would also grant the athletes tribute from their work, as one respondent noted that young athletes often get left in the shadows of adult, professional athletes.

Another aspect that visibility could bring along was the overall awareness of the event. People being aware of the event, the respondents suggested that the audience that would end up coming to the event would be greater by numbers. Another point of awareness was that also those who are not able to participate in the event physically could keep up with the spirit of the competitions and follow them from where they are able to. In that sense, social media withholds a functional purpose, because it is a channel where the event can be followed and attended without physical presence. One respondent also explained that some people prefer to view the results from social media.

> "For sure it brings visibility and information, that's too good things that it brings along. I think it's a good thing, at least for now I can't think of any negative sides, although there is some. But it always pays off for organizations." H1

> "I think that it's important that the event is in social media, not the least because these are competitions for the young, and we must get visibility for youth athletes too, because it's mostly adults. It can bring some kudos for the young in the start of their athletic careers. They can get into the forefront a little bit and then you can spot the new top athletes. So yeah, I think it's an important element to have these days." H3

> "In my opinion it's pretty important, that also those who don't attend the event and all over the world people get to know that okay, there's these competitions. Now that these are for all Europe, those who couldn't come here to watch could see in social media, what's happening." H5

> "Certainly it's important that also young people get to know because the young people are in social media. More audience can come or if they can't come, then they can follow from there what's happening and stuff, because in sports the audience also has a big role. Many also follow the results from Instagram and others so it's an important element in that sense too." H7

> "I like to keep up with what is happening, and through social media, it does add value. I can keep up better with what's happening and where, because you can see it from social media." H2

The other category besides visibility and awareness that most of the answers could be classified in was overall atmosphere and sense of community. All of the participants felt that social media did have an impact on these elements. For some of the respondents social media was convenient for showing the positive on-site atmosphere and inspiring others to attend. Social media was also seen as a tool for the event organizers to create hype and excitement around the event, making the attending participants feel more enthusiastic.

> "It does affect the atmosphere in a way that people get more excited when they see that there is something going on, so they attend the event and get even more excited." H4

> "You have kind of waited for this more, because you have seen that they
> will begin soon and it has been hyped up in social media." H2

On the other hand, if the social media accounts were positive-spirited and therefore appealing, it was perceived to create the same kind of atmosphere to the physical event. Atmosphere was seen to be a key component in a sport event because it could help the athlete succeed in their performance. One respondent noted that it could make the participants feel more satisfied with the overall event experience.

> "For example, yesterday was the opening ceremony that created good on-
> site atmosphere, so then I went to see on social media that they had
> updated from there for those who couldn't be there. That's good for them,
> so that they can see how it was." H1

> "Well you can create good vibes there, so if the social media is positive,
> then it can be spread on-site to the event location. And the audience and
> the athletes get a feeling that this is a good event and it is nice to be
> involved." H7

> "Its kind of the same as if there is audience and the audience feels like
> they have an important role in the event, it does lift up the spirit and helps
> the athlete in a sense that if the atmosphere is good, it is more fun to
> compete than if there was no atmosphere at all." H3

Sense of communality was another feature that many of the respondents spoke about. Interacting with other participants in social media was seen to create a communal feeling, where the people in the event feel a sense of belonging together. One respondent noted that seeing posts about athletes from other countries coming together to spend some free time created a feeling of communality. Social media posts were the tool to transmit feelings and therefore create a certain image about the event.

> "I think it can inspire a sense of communality, especially if you are in
> contact with the others who are there in social media, commenting or
> messaging, reacting to stories and so forth, it does kind of create a feeling
> that we are all one big family." H3

> "I think it can affect the atmosphere if positive and happy vibes are shared
> in social media. (---)…that if you can see athletes from different countries
> playing something together, even if you weren't there to witness it live,
> you can see it. You can see that it's a communal event and you saw that
> there were clearly good vibes and atmosphere in all the different sports,
> because you see the happy and cheerful videos and pictures. "H5

> "The role (of social media) is really significant. There were a lot of posts
> on the EYOF-account, and it does create a communal feeling and a sense
> of belonging to the event. So, I would see it in an important role nowadays
> in events like this." H6

Interviewing VuokattiSport, the role of social media was also seen to be very significant, because of the target group's age. Secondly, it was pointed out that it is an important channel for information and offers real-time data on for example which athletes have been successful in the events. The organizer also believes

that as young people get to work on the event together, friendships are made and social media can boost this.

> "The role is significant, for sure, because the target group is people born in 2003-2006, in average. It's a channel for information for one. And when I think about this kind of event for juniors, young for the young so I think there were quite many friendships made. From social media, they can check right away like oh, that's the winner and oh, he's on the podium and such. I think this happens quite a lot." H8

5.7   Event experience

As a final theme of the interviews, we discussed the overall event experience. The main objective with this theme was to find out what factors in the event do the participants find most important when attending. Another objective was to inquire whether the participants had been satisfied with the event and if they had some suggestions for future improvement. Although some of the participants in the interviews had attended as a volunteer and not an athlete, most of them had background in competitive sports in their personal lives, so they could offer some insight from that point of view as well.

In table 8 below, the factors which the respondents mentioned to be most essential to them are listed in the order in which they came up. The factors that the respondents found the be the most essential in sport events were mainly focused on one aspect: the clarity of communication, which was linked to many other elements. Three out of eight respondents answered that they find the general clarity to be most vital. Attending the competition involves a broad amount of information and instructions, and it was wished that those would be easily found from for example the website of the event. On-site, the athletes wished for clarity in marking the functions, such as places of performance or sanitary spaces. One respondent explained that clarity meant that the athletes are not required to spend a lot of time or effort in order to be able to locate different functions. Another respondent added that social media could be used as a tool to clarify the flow of information, but that it should not be the primary channel, as it is often cluttered with information. It was also noted that clarity of communications was something that is very noticeable. If communication was cluttered and unclear, it would be recognized immediately.

> "It needs to be of course kind of clear, so that it's clearly organized, information about where you can find everything, so that you have given the info of where everything is and you can find your way there. So that it's not behind a lot of investigation and work, for example where the first aid is located. (---) Clarity is a really important element for one, so if it's not there, you notice it right away."H3

> "I don't think there's any particular things, but just that everything would be organized as clearly and simply, so that for example you find the places of performances without effort and everything works as it should. Everything you need is near and you can find for example some warm space in which you can change clothes or WC or something. And that the

> organizers are able to help, so if there's questions or something you don't know, the organizers are like yeah, there's the restaurant and so forth." H5

> "I guess that the instructions are clear at least and all the information that's needed can be easily found from the event's website. If you are for example a skier, the ski trail maps and such information. At the competition venue, everything is clear, and the ski trails are marked well and so forth. And also it does create sort of modern feeling if its promoted in social media. It can be used for saying, now everything is on the website or there can be some links, but it shouldn't be the primary information channel, because there's so much stuff that it can go past me but it can be additional." H7

Other factors that were brought up were closeness of event location, places of performance, accommodation, music, easiness of getting assistance or help, food services and transportation in the location. One of the respondents noted that they paid attention to whether the organizing staff were able to help them, in a case where they did not know something for themselves. Music was seen to be an essential factor in creating a good atmosphere. One respondent mentioned that an event this size had a lot of factors to consider and expressed that every element has its importance in making the event successfully organized.

> "Well perhaps the most important is something like music, it's always like, you get better vibes from it." H4

> "Well of course from an athlete's point of view, I think the place of performance and also the accommodation and others, yeah." H2

> "It's such a big event and there's so much organizing, so a lot of things to pay attention to. But food, how accommodation and transportation are arranged, so pretty much everything." H6

TABLE 9 Most essential elements in a sport event mentioned by participants

Respondent	Factors
H1	Closeness of event location
H2	Place of performance, accommodation
H3	Clarity
H4	Music
H5	Clarity, easy to get help
H6	Food, accommodation, transportation
H7	Clarity, place of performance

In general, all of the respondents were satisfied with the EYOF2022 event. There were some notions about the atmosphere of the competition, which the respondents found to be pleasant and successful in that sense. One athlete had made a notion that although the competitions were serious, the atmosphere was not too solemn. Based on their answers, the general opinion of the respondents was that the positive atmosphere had an impact on whether the event experience was pleasing. Respondents also recognized weather and communality as influencing factors.

"You have already been able to see the good atmosphere. It has been really nice to follow it on-site." H2

"It has been a good experience, everything has worked out well at least in my eyes, weather has been great so it has been really good competitions so far." H4

"It was very pleasant and communal, for example in the price giving ceremonies, there was a lot of audience and everyone was very supportive to one another also during the competitions. A very cheerful event, although we competed seriously, it didn't seem like people were too serious about it." H5

"It was a great experience. Previously I have been in biathlon junior world championships, there everyone is from the same discipline and everyone kind of knows each other, so it was great to get to attend this kind of big event with so many athletes and team officials and reps from different sports. Out of all it was the best to get to see other athletes and other sports performances." H6

The respondents were also asked to ponder on if they had some future improvement suggestions. Two participants mentioned the food services and one respondent would have been more satisfied, if the accommodation was more communal, as per their previous experience.

"All of the arrangements worked well in my opinion, but maybe the food could've been better." H7

"What I heard from foreigners, not everyone liked the food. I don't agree, but it's just what you're used to." H6

"Well, it was a bit of a bummer that people were accommodated in different places and some were pretty far away. So, it didn't become as communal as, like I have been in Switzerland in Youth Olympic Games, there had been built a big sort of Olympic village, where everyone was accommodated in the same place. There you could see more of the other sport's athletes and from other countries, everything was close there. In here where everything was so far away it was sort of just us, Finnish team by ourselves." H5

In the interview with VuokattiSport, it was highlighted that events should be organized with people in the center of thinking. Furthermore, the facilities and the sport venue are of importance. The interviewee emphasized that when thinking athlete-oriented, the timeliness and accuracy of results is vital, because the athletes are most interested in that.

"I held a presentation about how we figure out this organizing stuff. First I wrote there "people" and a big heart. So that we need to think about how we motivate people, how many are working, what age and such. Then secondly, facilities or places of performance, they need to be in top condition for sure. (---) I always think from the athlete's point of view, that they are interested in the results. The results need to come like "zap" from there. Not like "tomorrow we will maybe hand out medals, tomorrow we will know who won". Not like that, but professionals handling the results. It's not just with young athletes, but adults too. We think through everything athlete-oriented." H8

6   DISCUSSION

In this chapter, the implications are shown in two sections: theoretical contributions and managerial implications. Theoretical contributions are divided under subheadings to make the subject more clear and easier to comprehend. The subheadings are based on the research questions. After conclusions, research limitations are analyzed and ideas for future research presented.

The objective for this study was to contribute to the research gap that is generation Z's social media usage in a sport event context. The purpose of this study was also to offer VuokattiSport insights on how they could further utilize social media as an event organizer, when the target group is adolescents. This study aims to develop understanding of generation Z as social media users, offering information about for example what platforms they use, how they view social media and why they are involved with it. On the other side, this study also gathered views about the event experience in EYOF 2022, to find out what kind of improvements might be required and what elements the participants found to be imperative.

6.1   Theoretical contributions

6.1.1 Social media usage

Social media in all its characteristics is an integral part of the majority's lives, and not least of adolescents and young adults. Research by Pew Research Center reported that 45% of American teens were online almost constantly (Anderson & Jiang, 2018). It offers interactive possibilities for both, individual users but also organizations and businesses. Generation Z might be even more prone to social media use as they are seen to have different media usage habits than other age groups (Haenlain et al., 2020) and are more dependent on the feeling of being connected and belonging in a social group (Oberst et al., 2017). The results of this research support these statements as the majority, five out of eight of the respondents reported using social media for numerous hours daily. The interviewees explained that they feel that social media is undeniably a part of their days and that using it so easy that it happens without much effort. They also wanted to produce and share their own content, although half of the respondents preferred following others.

During the event, five of eight respondents had increased their social media use. This was caused by active following of the event online, connecting with new acquaintance and producing more of their own content. The respondents answered that following the event actively on social media although they are present on-site allows them to be even more aware of what is occurring. It was an important aspect that the events could be viewed from other's points of view, such as from someone's who's from another country. Constant communicating

with others and representing their own sport also online were also noted as challenges by MacIntosh and Dill (2017) and are especially influential when the athlete is of young age, because they have less control over their emotions such as stress (Kristiansen & Roberts, 2010). Nonetheless, as reported, smartphone usage does affect also cognitive capabilities and create distractions (Lara & Bokoch, 2021). Recognizing the social and cognitive stressors that social media can cause, athletes can be seen to be under a vast amount of stress when competing. Controversiarly, one of the reasons for social media use can be stress and the need to relax (Brailovskaia et al., 2020). This could imply a self-inducing circle, which could potentially lead to weakened overall well-being. In this study, the participants did not report any well-being issues related to social media, but rather saw it as merely positive element.

However, the reasons behind social media use are various. Many studies, by for example Whiting and Williams (2013), Brailovskaia et al. (2020) and Schillack and Margraf (2010) agree that social interaction is the main identified reason. In this research, it was mentioned by only three out of the eight respondents, implicating that interaction was not as important to the participants in this study as it has been seen to be in previous research. Respondents however felt that social media platforms are a useful and easy tool to communicate with other people, so although they did not identify it as the main reason, it seems to be an integral aspect in the usage. The main identified reason in this study was to pass time and find entertainment, which was for five of eight respondents. According to Whiting and Williams's (2013) model, pass time and entertainment were mentioned by 76% and 64% of respondents, which is in line with this study's result.

Another aspect related to interactivity that was mentioned by five out of eight respondents was that they are on social media to follow and see what other people are doing and even would feel left out if they did not. As mentioned previously, feeling of missing out is more common within adolescents (Oberst et al., 2013), and can lead to more excessive social media use (Roberts & David, 2019). Surveillance and knowledge of others is however not always caused by FOMO, and in Whiting and Williams's (2013) study they found that 32% listed it as a reason. In the 2013 research, it was justified that one wants to "keep up with others", which could however be linked to FOMO. In the contrary to previous studies, only one respondent in this study mentioned FOMO. However increased surveillance of other people's activities which was often reported, could eventually lead to the feeling of missing out.

The third main reason that was answered was self-presentation. This view is in line with Nadkarni and Hofmann (2012), who stated that the need for self-presentation is the other main reason for social media use along with the need for social belonging. Fourthly, building personal brand image as an athlete was another reason to be involved in social media. According to Geurin (2017) and Arai et al. (2013), building a personal brand as an athlete on social media offers new marketing and sponsor opportunities, but also requires a lot of effort and time. Arai et al. (2013) also noted that athlete brands are more commonly found with professional athletes, which is not necessarily the case with young athletes. However, Arai et al. (2013) also discussed that distinguishable features could

make the athlete appear as a brand, which can also apply to youth athletes. In this study, informative purposes for social media were not as common, as they were in Whiting and Williams's (2013) study, where it was mentioned by 80% of respondents. To conclude the results of reasoning, mostly respondents wanted entertainment, interactive opportunities and some space for self-presentation.

The type of content that was desired by the respondents in this study was a combination of entertainment and informational. Although the participants did not use social media for informational purposes, many of them wished to see informational content on the event's social media accounts, which presents a contradiction. In turn, although entertainment was the main identified reason for use, none of the respondents wanted only entertaining content on the event's social media accounts. This can lead to the conclusion that the event's social media channels are mostly seen as an informational and purposeful platform rather than a place for pure leisure activities. As the Whiting and Williams (2013) study shows, the majority of users search for information from social media and it could be the case in this study also in the case of following the event. The contradict could be simply caused by the way that the answers are analyzed. In other words, although the respondents originally identify as being in social media for entertainment purposes, they still use some platforms and channels mainly for information searching and thus it is the content that they wish to see on those platforms.

6.1.2 Engagement behaviour

When analyzing engagement behavior related to the event within Dolan et al. (2016) social media engagement behavior construct, it can be noted that participants showed positive or neutral behavior. The majority, six out of eight respondents had followed the event on social media. According to Dolan et al. (2016), passively viewing and consuming brand-related content means that the engagement behavior can be seen to be minimally positive. If the user decides to react to the content in some way, for example by virtually liking it, it can be seen to be a moderately positive form of engagement. Liking the posts was the most common way of responding to the content within this study's respondents, but the threshold to comment or take other interactive actions was however higher. The respondents answered that they might show more positive engagement behavior, if they felt like the content was good enough to share along or if there was some incentive behind it, such as a raffle. This is in line with Baird and Parasnis (2011) and supports the view in which users are interactive if they in fact feel like they can benefit from it, such as by receiving discounts.

Some of the respondents reported that they have published some content in collaboration with VuokattiSport and EYOF. Co-creating brand-related content is seen to be a highly positive form of engagement, but according to Dolan et al. (2016) this would require for it to be un-prompted. This is not necessarily the case if the athletes or participants are asked to publish or create this type of content. It could however make the creators feel more involved with the brand and thus inspire them to engage with the brand on their own.

What needs to be noticed when analyzing engagement behavior in this event is that all the respondents were satisfied with the event and showed positive engagement behavior. It has been discovered that negative experiences from a brand inspire negative engagement behavior easier than positive experiences inspire positive behavior (Do et al., 2020). Therefore, if the participants of the study had not been satisfied with the overall event, they might have shown more active engagement behavior, although towards a negative direction.

6.1.3 The role of social media in EYOF2022

One of the research objectives in this study was to find out what kind of role social media has in sport events. It was agreed in the interviews that the role is not unambiguous, but rather a broad concept that includes different aspects. This research suggest that the role of social media could be shared into two categories: visibility and awareness and atmosphere and communality. Visibility was seen to be vital for the young athletes, as it can get them supporters, sponsors and partners. Athlete's social media presence was also noted as a marketing opportunity in literature, such as in studies by Geurin (2017) and Arai, Ko & Ross (2013), as was mentioned previously. As MacIntosh and Dill (2017) summarized, athletes nowadays face a lot of challenges outside of the actual sport performance, social media presence being one of them. Social media presence can add to the individual's pressure of representing not only themselves but also the sport and organization they belong to. It can be comparable to the presence of a physical audience, which Kristiansen and Roberts (2010) found to be a competitive stressor in EYOF2007. In that sense, visibility and awareness can increase anxiety and stress related to the athlete's event experience, but in turn can also make it more positive. The respondents did also mention that visibility could attract more audience on-site, which they found to be a favorable situation.

In this study, for the athletes visibility and awareness were described in a positive way rather than viewing it as a stressor. It must however be remembered, that whereas increased social media usage can lead to for example lower self-esteem, depression and loneliness, it can also do the positive opposite. Increased social media usage does not however lead to these alone, but are affected by some mediating factors, such as young age which can make the individual more easily influenced. (Oberst et al., 2017). In this sense, visibility and awareness in social media has its flipsides and the matter should be viewed from both facets, while keeping in mind that the outcome is dependent on the individual themself. Another role related to visibility and awareness was that from social media, the respondents could follow the event and witness those moments, which they were not able to see live. It was also seen to be important that those who were not attending the event, could see what was happening through social media. This matter came up with many of the interview themes, such as reasons to use social media and the use of social media during the event, so the informational and observative aspect can be considered to be a part of social media's role.

The other major role that social media was seen to have in EYOF2022 was to create a positive atmosphere and communal feeling. As Getz and Page (2006) described, athletes can compete to have success but also to gain social experiences and feeling of belonging to a group. A positive atmosphere in a sports event benefits many stakeholders. It attracts an audience to attend, sponsors gain better effectiveness of advertising and organizers can benefit from better turnover (Uhrich & Königstorfer, 2009). Therefore, the meaning of the overall atmosphere should be recognized. In the interviews, the respondents also expressed that a good atmosphere could help the athlete perform better. In turn, it was also noted that social media does affect the atmosphere. Uplifting content on social media seemed to create a "hype" around the event, making the attending participants more excited and creating a feeling to all attendees that the event is worthwhile. It must be remembered that not always event-related content is beneficial for the brand and thus the organizations are not able to have full control over the image that people form of the event (Getz & Page, 2016). In this case, the content that the participants created and shared was seen to be positive and therefore in line with VuokattiSport's brand. The impact of social media content related to EYOF 2022 can therefore be perceived to be valuable and favorable to the organizing party.

6.1.4 Overall event experience

In general, the participants in this study were very satisfied with EYOF2022 and the arrangements around it. As MacIntosh and Nicol (2012) noted, if the participants were not satisfied, it could have a negative effect on the athlete's attitude and excitement towards the whole event and organizer creating a possibly harmful image of the brand and even lead to underachieving in the actual sports performance.

In this study, event experience was explained with terms of perceived service quality, in which the literature was based on. While Kelley and Turley (2001), Yoshida and James (2011) and Theodorakis et al. (2001) were more focused on the point of view of a wider spectre of participants, such as spectators, MacIntosh and Nicol's (2012) focus was on the athlete's perspective. Because this study has participants from both sides it is reasonable to analyze the matter with this literature.

Nearly half of the respondents (three out of eight) mentioned clarity of communications to be the most essential factor in a sport event and service quality. In this case clarity meant for example that all of the different functions could be easily found in the event location and information related to the event was understandable, sufficient and could be easily found. In previous research concerning clarity, Yoshida and James (2011) have also noted that facility access including for example signs and the venue layout affect the event experience. Furthermore, MacIntosh and Nicol (2012) found communication to be one of the event experience factors. Therefore, the findings in this study are consistent with previous studies.

Other factors that the respondents found most essential were closeness of event location, places of performance, accommodation, music, easiness of getting help, food- and transportation services. Whereas other factors were also found by Kelley and Turley (2001), Yoshida and James (2011), Theodorakis et al. (2001) and MacIntosh and Nicol (2012), closeness of event location and music were not discussed in any of the previous studies. However, as those are fairly specific components, they can be seen to be found under for example atmosphere and the general venue. For example, for some music can be very influential to the overall mood of the event and if the event location is close, it can be beneficial.

As Kelley and Turley (2001) and Theodorakis et al. (2001) explained, the actual sport performance is one of the most vital elements that affect the participant's perceived service quality and thus the overall experience. In this study, the participants did not mention that actual performance would be in the core of their experience. MacIntosh and Nicol (2012) however noted that satisfaction affects the perceived experience and in turn, disappointment in performance might affect satisfaction negatively. In addition, while previous studies focus on adults, the target group in this study was adolescents. According to the results of this study, it implies that young people might have different priorities when they attend a sport event, and the overall experience might be considered to be more important than the actual performance. The lack of mentioning the core product, differing from previous literature, could also be caused by the fact that the respondents understood the question in a more practical sense than analyzing it in a deep level.

6.2   Managerial implications

This study offers event organizers information on how to execute social media marketing when the target group is generation Z and also offers some insight on what elements the participants look for and find essential when attending a sport event.

Generally, the participants were pleased with the experience in EYOF 2022 and VuokattiSport. Whereas some of the influencing factors were something that the organizer cannot control such as the weather and closeness of event location, the participants brought up some points that event organizers can work with. Clarity, employee responsiveness, music and accommodation were seen as relevant factors. Communality was seen to be an important element and event organizers should try to increase the feeling with for example accommodation. An example from Switzerland, where all of the athletes were accommodated in the same place, was presented as ideal and could help the feeling of social cohesion.

Communality and cohesion were brought up also in social media topics. Social media was seen to be a tool for creating this kind of atmosphere and should therefore be furthermore utilized to unify the group of attendees. This could also include activities before and after the actual event, as beforehand it could create

hype around the event and ease the networking on-site and afterwards increase overall satisfaction and positive engagement.

Another element that was brought up within several themes was the importance of visibility and awareness. To maximize the effect of these, event organizers should do market research on how to utilize social media and reach not only their primary target group, but other possible supporters and partners. Optimizing the platforms used is a step that event organizers should take. As this study shows along with other timely reports, short-form videos are a current trend. TikTok, being a platform based on short-form videos, is a strongly growing channel that organizations whose target group is generation Z should utilize. TikTok's algorithm also allows the content to be seen by others who could then become interested in the subject, as was brought up by one of the interviewees.

As for the other platforms, Instagram was seen to be the number one and Snapchat a great tool for communicating with friends. About Instagram, the participants wished that it would not be flooded with too much information and hoped to see some entertaining content as well. Snapchat was seen as more of a communication utility compared to a platform to other social media activity. Consequently, event organizers could benefit from thinking of ways to increase communication between event participants on Snapchat, as many respondents and the organizing party all reported that networking and building friendships in the EYOF-event is an essential part of it.

6.3   Study limitations and future research

The trustworthiness of a study is often analyzed with reliability and validity. Reliability tells repeatability of the study whereas reliability measures if the results are what was examined. However, the use of these concepts in qualitative research has been criticized, as they have been created for quantitative research. The main point is nonetheless to examine the way the study was executed to conclude if it is trustworthy. Trustworthiness can be analyzed with different parts in the process of the research, but with the coherence of the whole research in mind. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2011.)

The theoretical background to this study was broad and aimed to compare different views. Citations were used on a wide range and mostly from highly ranked academic sources, with the addition of some timely reports. Collecting the empirical data was executed with interviews with the target group and they were recorded. During the interviews, concepts such as social media were discussed in advance so that the interviewee understood the context properly. On the other hand, interviewees were able to speak freely. The interviews were conducted with remote access, which can make the situation less intimidating, especially when talking about adolescents. The transcription was done immediately after the interviews. Because the interviews were in Finnish but this study was in English, the transcriptions had to be translated. Translating texts is a challenge, especially when the speech contains language as it is commonly

spoken and vernacular expressions, but it was performed carefully so that the meaning of the expression remained. The interviewing, transcription and translation was done by the same person, which increases reliability. Afterwards the interview data was analyzed thoroughly. When the study was completed, it was presented to the case organization VuokattiSport. This ensures the validity of the study and takes the case organization's point-of-view into account.

One of the challenges as mentioned was translation, but perhaps the major challenge was the small size of the sample, with eight participants. The interviewees were also all from Finland and can therefore offer insight on only one region. Participants from other countries could have had much different views on the subjects and could therefore have offered new information. The interviewees were also from the older side of the target group and 14–15-year-olds could have had divergent notions.

For future research, the same type of research could be performed in many different settings. For example, many of the athletes in this research had experience in skiing sports and there might have different habits. Additionally, the sports organizations might have some takes on how the athletes use social media in the event. Social media habits can vary a lot depending on the user's age or background, for example their home country.

As it was also seen when previously presenting the social media platforms, some age groups use different channels. For example, over 56-year-olds use YouTube actively, but TikTok rarely. Changing the target group or the environment could therefore provide much differing results. It must also be remembered that the target group in this study were adolescents, who might have a more difficult time analyzing the matter in a deep sense. Adults could have more deeper insights and be able to better reflect on their own behavior and habits.

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APPENDIX 1 BASIC STRUCTURE FOR INTERVIEWS

Background: age, role in the event

Social media habits

- Describing social media use habits
- helping questions:
    - Do you use social media? If so, how much time do you spend in social media?
    - What platforms do you use?
    - What kind of content do you produce in social media?
    - Describe your social media use habits before / during / after the event.
        - are there changes?
    - Do you often engage with brands in social media? e.g. likes, comments, reviews

Event experience & engagement

- Describing the event experience.
- helping questions:
    - When attending a sport event, what do you pay attention to?
        - e.g facilities, security…
    - How was the event experience in EYOF2022?
    - What could have the event organizer done better?
    - Have you participated EYOF previously?
    - What is important to you when attending a sport event?
    - Have you come across EYOF in social media?
        - Have you connected with EYOF in social media? (engagement behaviour)
    - What social media platforms does EYOF2022 utilize?
        - Do you think the platforms are useful?
    - Does social media use affect your experience?