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THE EFFECT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON  
PURCHASING  
OF SPORTING GOODS

by

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I, Jana Viola Hofbauer, hereby declare that the material contained in this submission is original work performed by me under the guidance and advice of my mentor, Dan Ravick Fiala. Any contribution made to the research by others is explicitly acknowledged in the thesis.

I also declare that this work has not previously been submitted in any form for a degree or diploma in any university.

Jana Viola Hofbauer, May 6, 2016

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## **Abstract**

The aim of the thesis is to analyze how social media influence the purchasing of sporting goods. It focuses on the social media strategies of the main sporting goods brands - Nike, Adidas, Reebok, Puma and Under Armour. Moreover, it investigates how the customers have' behavior process changed since the introduction of social media and how have the companies adjusted their marketing strategies to the changing requirements and expectations of the customers. It also covers the topic of leveraging customers' brand loyalty and overall brand awareness through electronic word-of-mouth. Further, it evaluates the influence of social media marketing on the firms' revenue and profit and methods how can be the return on investments in social media propagation calculated. The thesis also includes the survey of consumer behavior in the Czech Republic and how it is influenced by social media tools and campaigns.

**Keywords:** social media, sporting goods, consumer behavior, brand loyalty, brand awareness

# 1 Introduction

The Internet and Social Media especially have changed the way of communication between the marketer and the consumers ultimately. Strategies, which might work for the last 30 years are not applicable anymore. As the basic needs and of the consumers might remain the same, their expectations about provided services and presentation of the product and the company itself have changed significantly. The rapid growth of Internet-based activities has modified the nature of human activities to that extent, that it is necessary for firms to rethink their marketing strategies (Tiago & Veríssimo, 2014).

From the view of consumer, presence of the web and social media in their daily life brings many advantages while making their purchasing decision. According to Bayo-Moriones and Lera-López (as cited in Tiago & Veríssimo, 2014), the use of internet technologies brings them many benefits, such as “efficiency, convenience, richer and participative information, a broader selection of products, competitive pricing, cost reduction, and product diversity”.

However, for the firms and producers, the social media presence represents a great challenge. The pressure of consumers’ expectations increased competitiveness and transparency while the requirements for the speed of communications are measured in minutes, not days as it might have been without the power of the internet.

The question is, how is the presence of social media influencing the enormous market of sportswear and sporting goods with its revenue of 146.47 billion U.S. dollars in 2014 (Statista, 2015). As Tiago and Veríssimo (2014) stated, “if most consumers engage with social media, firms should engage with social media as well.” The investments in social media marketing are constantly growing, as according to the research of Berthon, Pitt, Plangger and Shapiro, the importance of peers’ opinions about products overvalues

firms' promotion (as cited in Tiago & Veríssimo, 2014). That is why the shift from a traditional way of communication, such as direct mailing, telemarketing, television, radio and other tools how to address potential customers, is visible in firms' marketing strategies (Tiago & Veríssimo, 2014).

## **2 History of Sports and Current Situation of the Sporting Goods Market**

With growing importance and interest of consumers in a healthy lifestyle, the need for sporting goods is increasing simultaneously. The 21<sup>st</sup> century not only brought the change of interpersonal and marketing communication but also shifted the preferences of consumers and the perception of sporting activities. With increasing possibility of obesity and other civilization diseases, sport, and sports activities in overall are highly promoted by authorities. As still a significant part of the human population ignores the symptoms of the absence of physical activities and spend still more time in front of television, maybe even watching sports programs, and computers while eating junk food, the other part decided to devote more time while doing something for their health – doing sports. However, doing sports is not enough – as ever-present media campaigns suggest, there is something more important than performing the sport itself. Using the right equipment is necessary. Moreover, using the equipment of the right brand.

### **2.1 Leading Players in Sportswear and the Sporting Goods Market**

Sporting goods industry has a very long tradition. The beginning of sporting competitions is dated back in ancient Greece with the introduction of Olympic Games serving as the celebration of Gods. The foundation of Olympic Games can be traced back to 773 BC to the City of Olympia. Key areas of competition were running, wrestling, boxing, equestrian events and pentathlon, as all of these were performed by



naked male athletes and all the equipment needed were made by local craftsmen International Olympic Committee, 2012). The first-ever modern Olympic Games were held in 1896 in Athens (International Olympic Committee, n.d.) and the range of sports performed by athletes was significantly higher – altogether 43 events.

Since the re-introduction of Olympic Games the sports industry registered enormous growth spurt. All generations of people are more interested not only in the active performing of sports but also in passive watching of professional athletes' performances, in particular with the introduction of radio broadcasting in the 1890s and of television transmission of life sports events in 1940s (Berkman, 1988).

The growing interest in sports in overall causes significant development in equipment suppliers, with first innovations, investments in marketing and sponsorships of successful athletes, with Nike, Inc. in the leading position worshipping the origin of sports – ancient Greece with their name again.

### **2.1.1 Nike, Inc.**

Nike, Inc. was founded in 1964 as Blue Ribbon Sports by Bill Bowerman and Phil Knight, firstly distributing goods of Japanese manufacturer Onitsuka Tiger, now known as Asics (O'Reilly, 2014) in the backside of their truck. The firm was officially registered as Nike, Inc. in 1971, named after the Greek goddess of victory (O'Reilly, 2014). The “swoosh logo” and the “Just Do It” slogan are ones of the most recognizable symbols all around the world.

Nike is designing and producing a broad portfolio of products for various sports disciplines and marketing them under subsidiary brands, such as Nike Football, Nike Running, Nike+, Air Force1, Air Jordan, Nike Golf, Nike Pro, Nike Skateboarding and many others (Nike, n.d.). Under those sub-brands, Nike manufactures products for

“eight key categories: Running, Basketball, Football (Soccer), Men’s Training, Women’s Training, Action Sports, Sportswear (sports-inspired lifestyle products)” (Nike, n.d.).

The most iconic Nike products are sneakers, especially those models: The Nike Air Jordan I, Nike Airforce, Nike Cortez, Nike Air Max and Nike Air Huarache (Bengtson, Warnett, Engvall, Schonberger, 2012).

The wholly acquired subsidiaries are surfing brand Hurley and iconic brand of sneakers, Chuck Taylor’s Converse All Star (Nike, n.d.).

### **2.1.2 Adidas**

Adidas was founded in Germany by two brothers, Adolf Dassler and Rudolf Dassler, as Gebrüder Dassler Schuhfabrik in 1924, creating their shoes in their mother’s kitchen (Kyle, 2006).

At the Summer Olympics in 1936, Adi Dassler brought their shoes to the Olympic village and persuaded Jesse Owens, African-American sprinter to wear their spikes during his competitions. After winning four gold medals, the “Dassler shoes” established an excellent reputation (Kirschbaum, 2013).

After they disputed in 1949, Adolf “Adi” Dassler registered his brand Adidas.

Nowadays, Adidas operates mainly under three sub-brands – Adidas for strictly sporting goods and lifestyle brands Adidas Original and Adidas NEO (Adidas, n.d.).

The most iconic Adidas products are Adidas Super Star, Adidas SL 72, similar to Nike Cortez, Adidas Stan Smith and Adidas Americana (Bengtson, Engvall, Schonberger, Johnson, 2013).

Company Reebok is also one of Adidas’ subsidiaries (Adidas, n.d.a).

### **2.1.3 Reebok**

The company was founded in 1895 in Bolton, the United Kingdom by Joseph William Foster as J.W. Foster and Sons. Firstly, they were manufacturing basic running shoes for the whole England, but like the idea of producing spiked running shoes came, they become the official distributor of the 1924 British Olympic Track & Field team (Adidas, n.d.b).

In 1958, the company was named to Reebok according to the type of an African antelope (Adidas, n.d.b).

In 1982, Reebok introduced their iconic Freestyle, a first-ever athletic shoe designed for women. With their innovative approach to new sports, Reebok helped to establish worldwide at that time ground-breaking sports activities, such as aerobic or step aerobics, and more recently CrossFit, Spartan Race, Les Mills or worldwide popularization of UFC, Ultimate Fighting Championship in mixed martial arts (Reebok Fitness, n.d.).

In 2008, the company was acquired by Adidas Group (Adidas, n.d.b).

### **2.1.4 Puma**

Puma was founded as RuDa in 1948, after the split of Dassler brothers' company, by Rudolf Dassler, later named as Puma (Puma, n.d.).

In 1948, Puma also introduced their first football shoe named ATOM and later in 1952 invented the first-ever football shoe with screw-in studs (Puma, n.d.). That initiated still ongoing Puma's "highly successful heritage in football" (Puma, n.d.).

### **2.1.5 Under Armour**

Under Armour was founded in 1996 by Kevin Plank. After extensive research, he has introduced first t-shirt made of "moisture-wicking performance fibers" which enabled

athletes to keep cool, dry and light even during their performance, instead of usually used cotton shirts (Under Armour, n.d.). Later there were introduced lines of clothing suitable for all seasons – HotGear, ColdGear, and AllSeasonGear.

Less than a year after the foundation, Under Armour made its first team sale (Under Armour, n.d.).

### **2.1.6 Size of the firms regarding their revenue**

As it can be seen (Figure n. 1), Nike is currently operating the largest share of the market with almost 30 billion of Euros global revenue in 2015 and its revenue is exponentially increasing every year since 2011. Adidas Group, including the income of both Adidas and Reebok brand, earned almost half of Nike's earnings in 2015 with 16.92 billion Euros. However, the growth of Adidas Groups' income is not as stable as Nike's. After an increase in 2010 to 2012, the revenue decreased in 2013 and 2014 until the growth of 2 billion Euros in 2015.

However, the largest growth of revenue is recorded by Under Armour. As its global revenue of 2014 was 3.08 U.S. Dollars, 2.67 Billion Euros (Under Armour, 2015) and in 2015 it increased by 31 % to 3.96 billion U.S. Dollars, 3.44 Billion of Euros (Under Armour, 2016b). The company projects approximately 25 % growth in global revenues to 4.95 billion of U.S. Dollars, 4.3. Billions of Euros (Under Armour, 2016b).

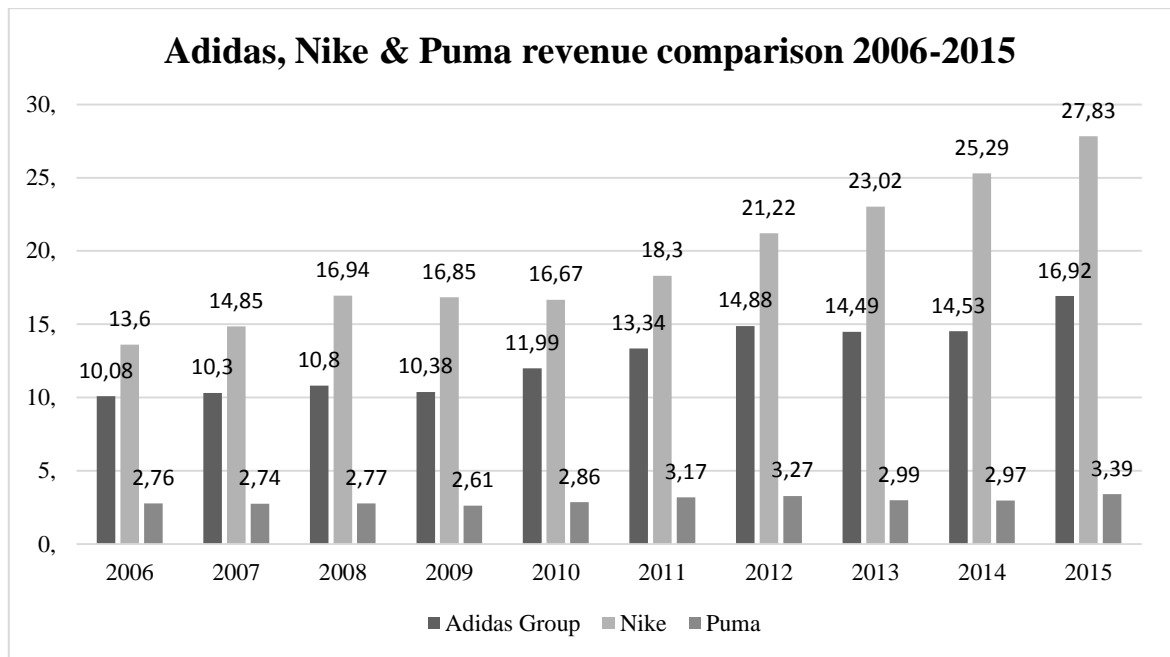


Figure n. 1: Global Revenues of Adidas Group, Nike, and Puma from 2006 to 2015 in billion Euros (Statista, 2016e)

## 2.2 Main Distribution Channels

Sporting goods are distributed both offline and online. The share of e-commerce and its potential is continuously exponentially growing, however, sporting goods' consumers still enjoy the offline shopping experience, rather than purchasing the goods through the online shop (Czech Statistical Office, 2010).

### 2.2.1 Physical stores

The sporting goods are sold in three types of distribution channels: brand store, distributing a broad range of products of a single brand and its subsidiary brand; specialized store offering equipment needed for specific sport or sports category; or global sporting goods store offering a broad range of brands for many different sports activities.

In the Czech Republic can be found flagship stores of Nike, Adidas, and Puma. Reebok and Under Armour are sold in specialized sports stores with products of other brands or one of the Czech chains of sports shops, such as Sportissimo, Hervis Sport or A3 Sport.

### **2.2.2 Online shopping**

According to Eurostat, the official statistics board of the European Union, nearly 60% of EU internet users shop online, while the most common purchases made through the web are clothing and sporting goods (as cited in Ecommerce Europe, 2013).

However, according to APEK in the Czech Republic, Asociace pro Elektronickou Komerici (Association for E-Commerce), the turnover of e-commerce increased by 14 billion Czech Crowns in between years 2014 and 2015 and in 2015 it was almost 81 billion Czech Crowns (Asociace pro Elektronickou Komerici, 2016)

The research of APEK also suggests, that in the Czech Republic, nearly 98 % of Czech internet users already have experience with online purchase and more than 50 % of them make more than five purchases per year (as cited in Effectix.cz, n.d.).

According to data of APEK long-going research, only 2 % of overall e-shop visits come from social media network, as the majority of them is made through search engines, such as Google and Seznam.cz in the Czech Republic (as cited in Effectix.cz, n.d.). In conclusion, it implies that social media tools are used by consumers to gain information, not to make a purchase, and companies should adjust their marketing strategies according to that. As a more successful tool, how to attract consumers to use the e-commerce interfere were proofed to be newsletters and internet promotions, such as Add Words and in Czech Republic Sklik, provided by Seznam.cz (Effectix.cz, n.d.).

## **2.3 Customers of Sporting Goods Brands**

Sport and sporting goods brands became the part of the lifestyle. As wearing of sporting clothes is now socially acceptable and even desirable, the brands can target a wider audience, not only professional and recreational athletes but also people who do not perform any sports or sports activities.

The global companies responded to this phenomenon by introducing or broadening their lifestyle sub-brands, such as Nike Sportswear, Adidas Originals and Adidas NEO, and Puma with their whole marketing strategy and product portfolio.

# **3 Changes in Marketing Strategies**

## **3.1 Tools**

Using traditional media, such as television, radio, newspapers and magazines, for marketing campaigns are the safe way how to target potential customers. However, viral marketing through social media enables to firms target specific audiences with very low budget in comparison with traditional media, moreover, gain the same awareness as through high-frequency television advertising (Kaplan, Haenlein 2011).

As research suggests, the word-of-mouth, what can be considered as a basis for social media appearance and promotions, is “up to seven times more effective than traditional print advertising in impacting brand switching decisions” (Kaplan, Haenlein 2011). With traditional marketing tools, an increase of word-of-mouth might also be attained, but electronic word-of-mouth has according to Kaplan & Haenlein (2011) two main advantages to firms over traditional word-of-mouth. Firstly, higher diffusion speed than while relying on face-to-face communication among customers. Secondly, the electronic word-of-mouth is easy to be monitored and enables companies to analyze the impact of their campaigns on their earnings (Kaplan, Haenlein 2011).

In 2013, Internet advertising expenses were predicted to increase to 101.5 million U.S. Dollars, by almost 14 % from 2012. In comparison, traditional media expenditures were predicted to increase only by 4 % (Tiago & Veríssimo, 2014).

This restructuring of traditional marketing has also completely changed the view on role models and brand ambassadors. Social media enables to share ideas, comments and opinions on products and brands to common people, which lead to a huge boom of bloggers and video bloggers.

### **3.1.1 Television**

Television is part of people's household for almost 50 years. As the TV consumption was growing every year, recent research showed surprising results. In the last quarter of 2016, time spent watching traditional television screen has decreased (Nielsen, 2016).

It is not caused by decreased usage of multimedia devices, but rather by increasing usage of television alternatives, such as Netflix for watching movies and television series more comfortably without the necessity of television advertisements, or YouTube or Snapchat for watching short informational videos. According to Snapchat, "up to 8 times U.S. 13 to 34 year-olds view Live Stories [on Snapchat] vs. TV for similar events" (Snapchat, n.d.).

Television also does not enable such precise target audience segmentation as it might be attained by social media marketing

### **3.1.2 Newspapers & magazines**

Since the introduction of Web 2.0 which enabled not only to firms distribute the information to their consumers, but also to share peer to peer content among potential customers, traditional media are struggling.



Newspapers and magazines are contending with continuously declining circulation. Their main disadvantage to the internet based platforms is the speed of delivery the information. As regarding newspapers, it usually takes almost a day to prepare the news to be shared with readers; magazines tend to have an even longer period between their issues.

Another disadvantage is the high cost of producing the actual newspapers or magazine. The majority of the expenses is paid by advertising sales, but still some part of the cost is transferred to the media consumers. That also increases the price of advertising for consumers, which make them switch to cheaper internet based advertising.

As a response to those problems, the majority of newspapers and magazines launched internet version of their media to respond to causes faster and increase their advertising income.

### **3.1.3 Social media channels**

In 2014, 50 % of all respondents in research held by Tiago & Veríssimo claimed that digital marketing and advertising is the major priority for their investments.

The web and social media ultimately might be a useful tool to create strong brands, moreover, to gain a competitive advantage. The creation of links with the customers through social media enables to firms not only to communicate their message but also actively increase engagement and strengthen the relationships between them and their clients, what should be the result of all efforts (Tiago & Veríssimo, 2014).

## **3.2 Role Models and Important Personalities**

The introduction of social media changed the spectrum of role models and influential personalities. In comparison with history, probably the biggest boom in popularity was

noted by bloggers. The social media platforms enabled them to self-propagate themselves free of charge and exponentially increase the number of their leaders.

As they were originally common people rather than celebrities, for consumers is very easy to identify themselves with them and consider them as opinion leaders in various types of product and services.

## **4 Changes in Purchasing Process**

Social media and peer-to-peer content in overall have changed the purchasing process significantly. Not only the pre-purchasing phase but also the behavior while the decision making during the purchase (Cao, Meister & Klante, 2014). Next to unconscious influence of opinion leaders and the brand awareness, the main factor consciously influencing customers' purchasing decision are users' reviews (Song & Joo, 2015). The word-of-mouth, the tool of peer-to-peer communication has according to Moller "a significant impact on consumer behavior and affects consumers' attitudes, purchase intentions and purchase decisions" (as cited in Cao, Meister & Klante, 2014).

The social media presence is visible in a few steps of making a purchase. In its initiation phase or pre-purchase phase, where the customer decides that he or she has a "need" or "want" for the product. His or her opinion is shaped by various factors, such as opinion leaders or marketing campaigns. The next step where the presence of social media is highly palpable is when the actual choice of the product is made, and the customer is cross-checking the reviews and social media comments on the product and makes the final decision on the purchase. That is why the firms need to handle their social media presence and adequately react to any mentions which can potentially harm the brand.

## **5 Social Media Strategies**

The presence of the brand on social media became standard expected by consumers and as it also enhances the credibility of the brand, the primary purpose of the usage of social media is to increase brand awareness and customer loyalty. According to Dong-Hun and Harvard Business Review Analytic Services (as cited in Gamboa & Gonçalves, 2014), most of the brands are on social media to achieve “notoriety, develop interactions with their customers, or just signal presence.” However, as stated by Gamboa & Gonçalves (2014), settling only for enhanced brand awareness without simultaneously further engaging their potential customers with the brand and creating customers’ loyalty, the brand is missing potential “golden grail” for their social media interactions.

However, to distinguish the difference between followers and actual customers to generate income through social media, the firms need to evaluate the relationship between their social media presence and their profits. According to Gamboa & Gonçalves (2014) the most severe challenge lies in creating “personal relationship” with the customer by creating appealing and creative content, answer all requests and react to discussions, and moreover, make the client feel like a part of the community beyond the marketing focus. While achieving that goal, companies are using strategies with different risk level, depending on the industry they are operating and also on “company’s tolerance for uncertain outcomes” (Wilson, Guinan, Parise & Weinberg, 2011).

According to Wilson, Guinan, Parise & Weinberg (2011), there are four major media strategies distinguished based on risk level and expected outcomes. The “predictive practitioner” is the strategy with minimal risk, trying to avoid uncertainty as much as

possible and to deliver results which can be precisely measured by available tools (Wilson, Guinan, Parise & Weinberg, 2011). This strategy is very often used by non-lifestyle companies, such as banks, travel agencies, and are based on customer service and daily direct interactions with customers rather than on viral experiments. The “creative experiment” strategy relies on embracing uncertainty and using tests on smaller portions of their audience and evaluating the results while learning from social media activities of their employees and customers (Wilson, Guinan, Parise & Weinberg, 2011). The “social media champion” tactics consist of significant initiatives with precisely calculated results based on previous experiences with the response of their audience (Wilson, Guinan, Parise & Weinberg, 2011). The “social media transformer” invest enormous budget in using unexpected results from “large-scale” interactions that enable to interact with both internal and external stakeholders (Wilson, Guinan, Parise & Weinberg, 2011).

For enhancing the brand awareness and customer loyalty, different companies use different strategies, for which is necessary to follow and complete the overall marketing strategy. According to research, without clear objectives, setting specific benchmarks and goals, and strategic steps how to achieve them, it is better for the company not to use social media at all (Tiago & Veríssimo, 2014).

## **6 The Most Effective Channels regarding Sporting Goods**

### **6.1 Different Social Media Channels**

Since the introduction and global popularization of social media and social media networks, many types of sharing platforms have evolved. Users have the opportunity not only to share text but also interactive content, such as images, videos, contents of other applications or links to other websites. According to Budden, Anthony, Budden &

Jones, (as cited in Tiago & Veríssimo, 2014) the possibility of co-creation of content allows to participants “to share knowledge, entertain one another, and promote dialogues among different cultures.”

According to research held in 2010 revealed that 79 % of Fortune 100 Best Companies were operating social media while 54 % already established Facebook web page (Gamboa & Gonçalves, 2014). According to Harvard Business Review Services (as cited in Gamboa & Gonçalves, 2014), not only that presence of companies is more or less expected from the majority of existing or potential consumers. By not being present on social media and not actively participating in Web 2.0, the company is risking “being talked” and unable to manage or respond, or even to know (as cited in Gamboa & Gonçalves, 2014).

### **6.1.1 Facebook**

Facebook was founded in 2004 by Harvard University student Mark Zuckerberg (Carlson, 2010). Facebook is currently the most used social media network with more than 1,5 billion users worldwide (Statista, 2016a) and with more than 4.2 million users in the Czech Republic (We Are Social, 2014).

Moreover, it also enables the highest range of types of shared posts, such as text posts, videos, content of other apps, links with a preview of the destination, or even built-in apps. Facebook also offers the most sophisticated promoting and advertising tools.

However, probably the most important feature of Facebook is that compared with other social media networks it increases the loyalty of customers, rather than brand awareness via “dynamic interaction with its fans on Facebook” which enables to the brand improve the satisfaction of customers and client relations (Gamboa & Gonçalves, 2014).

### **6.1.2 Twitter**

Jack Dorsey founded Twitter in 2006, and the first “tweet” was sent on March, 21. The original idea of Twitter was to share quick and fast-moving content limited to 140 characters. Later, the possibility of including a picture and hashtags into the messages was introduced. The hashtag was actually proposed by one of the Twitter users, and it enabled to sort the tweets according to topics and to suggest a recommendation to their users (Twitter, n.d.).

In 2015, Twitter acquires Periscope, video platform which enables to share life stream videos to its users. However, the popularity of Twitter is continuously declining (Twitter, n.d.; Griffith, 2014).

### **6.1.3 Instagram**

Instagram is photo and video based platform founded as a startup in 2010 by Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger. The application gained its first million of users in less than two months. The application enables their users to share images with various filters, description and hashtags, and tags, which enables to connect the picture with the brand of the product shown (Instagram, n.d.b).

Its popularity gained more than 80 million users per day, and the most followed accounts have more than 50 million of followers (Socialbakers, 2016d).

Until its acquisition by Facebook, there was no paid content, and all of the pictures were shared organically and listed chronically. However, early in 2016 unpopular choice were made to include paid advertisement chosen according to users’ preferences and also changing the chronological order of posts and replacing it with a special algorithm which should ensure the appearance of only related posts. This innovation goes against

the previous firms' social media campaigns, as they are effectively blocking their organic content, similar to what Facebook does.

#### **6.1.4 Snapchat**

Snapchat is video platform enabling sharing short videos and pictures called “Stories” which disappears after 24 hours. The platform enables to add text, emoticons and draw in the pictures and videos. Moreover, in 2015 Snapchat introduced new functionality – lenses. Lenses extension enables to add a real-time mask to the user, such as puppy ears, crying eyes and unicorn horn.

The users base is very young: “more than 60% of U.S. 13 to 34-year-old smartphone users are Snapchatters” (Snapchat, n.d.). However, as it is globally the fastest growing social network for millennials, it is very successful in U.S., for example in the Czech Republic the Snapchat is still waiting for its boom (Socialbakers, 2016e).

<b>Social Media Network</b>	<b>Number of Users Worldwide in Million</b>
Facebook	1,590
Twitter	320
Instagram	400
Snapchat	200

Table n. 1: Number of Active Users in April 2016 (Statista, 2016b; Socialbakers, 2016a)

## **6.2 Sporting Social Networks**

Recently, due to the exponentially growing popularization of social networks and an increasing number of sport-related posts, there were introduced many social platforms intended for sportsmen and sportswomen. They offer the opportunity of sharing not

only progress photographs and pictures of the food the users are eating to get the body they want to serve as an inspiration to others but also possibility of writing and reading reviews of desired products. Very often are those networks cooperating, or were even founded by sporting goods-resellers, and are generating revenues from all purchases made through those social networks.

In order to localize their promotions, both in terms of place or in terms of specific sport, the major sports brand companies might consider cross-promoting their products through these newly emerging platforms.

### **6.2.1 Fitmoo**

Fitmoo, Inc. was established in 2013 by Jeff Dymant with previous CEO experience in similar projects in order “to socialize, and monetize the fitness industry. Development began on a technology platform that could be used as a marketplace to distribute excess capacity, built on a social framework” (Fitmoo, n.d.). Through Fitmoo, it is not only possible to buy and sell products, but also share results of sports activities. Moreover, Fitmoo might serve as a tool for fitness center owners not only for their marketing activities and recruit new members but also as a reservation system for their lessons (Harbourne, 2015). The beta version was launched in October 2014 with almost 14,500 users gained through databases of CrossFit HQ, with whom is Fitmoo highly cooperating. The main influencers who also helped to build the Fitmoo community are top professional CrossFit athletes. The earliest representatives were Noah Ohlsen, whom himself has more than 34,000 likes on Facebook (Ohlsen, n.d.), Lindsey Valenzuela having more than 127, 000 likes (Valenzuela, n.d.). Later, they were joined by Annie Thorisdottir, who is one of the most recognizable faces of CrossFit community with more than 207, 000 likes on her Facebook web page (Thorisdottir,



n.d.), and also Matthew Fraser (Fraser, n.d.) with almost 39 thousand of Facebook followers.

Although, the success of Fitmoo might be disputable. Their cooperation with solely CrossFit athletes and focusing on CrossFit community have significantly narrowed their target audience. The most followed member of Fitmoo is Matthew Fraser, CrossFit athlete sponsored by Nike with 17.6 thousand followers and with the most recent post more than two months old (Fraser, n.d.).

### **6.2.2 Supertělo.cz**

Supertělo.cz is the Czech Republic based social network and internet magazine for sportsmen founded in 2014 as an alternative for sporting server Ronnie.cz. Ronnie.cz is Czech magazine and e-shop, providing news from various sports with a focus on bodybuilding and weightlifting related events as support and traffic driving tool for their e-shop with sporting goods and food sports supplements. As the target audience has changed and started to get their information from alternative and more convenient sources, such as social media, the owner of Ronnie.cz has responded in a unique way by launching the first sport social network in the Czech Republic. At first sight, Supertělo.cz is not related to Ronnie.cz in any way. As Ronnie.cz is targeting old-school athletes and body builders, Supertělo.cz has widened the target audience also to young athletes acknowledging alternative sports and lifestyle.

## **7 The Most Common Tools Used in Social Media**

### **Communication**

While creating the social media strategy, the companies use specific tools according to the audience they want to target and also to match their brand story and also marketing strategy in overall. Distinguishing of the right tools is essential, and those who are

successfully implemented by Nike, Inc. might not be helping Puma to accomplish their goals. The motto of Nike, Inc. is “if you have a body, you are an athlete” (Sanussi, Lazarev, Jorgensen, Latsanych, Badtiev, 2014). In comparison, different tools need to be used for Puma’s social media communication as their long-term goal is to be the most “desirable and sustainable sport-lifestyle company” (Puma, n.d.).

## 7.1 Sponsorships of Athletes

The most common way of increasing the social media appearance and its impact is to establish an endorsement with the successful or powerful athlete. Sponsorship is the least complicated way how to increase the brand awareness and potential customer loyalty, and to attract sports fans and non-professional athletes. In 2015, the global expenditures on sponsorships were 60.2 billion of U.S. Dollars (Statista, 2016f).

Nowadays, being a successful athlete is not enough for global brands to consider them as eligible for potential sponsorship. Athletes need to be active and visible on social networks, not only to self-promote themselves to attract the brand, but also to promote the products they have been endorsed with further.

As it can be seen from Forbes Top 100 paid athletes, those athletes who are active on social media and have a large number of followers tend to have more earnings from their endorsements rather than from their salary and winnings (Forbes, 2016).

<b>Name of the Athlete (Sport)</b>	<b>Salary and Winnings (in million U.S. Dollars)</b>	<b>Endorsements (in million U.S. Dollars)</b>	<b>Main Sponsor Sporting Goods Company</b>
Roger Federer (Tennis)	9	58	Nike, Wilson
Tiger Woods (Golf)	0.6	50	Nike
LeBron James (Basketball)	20.8	44	Nike
Kevin Durant	19.1	35	Nike

(Basketball)			
Rory McIlroy (Golf)	16.3	32	Nike
Novak Djokovic (Tennis)	17.2	31	Adidas, Head
Rafael Nadal (Tennis)	4.5	28	Nike, Babolat
Cristiano Ronaldo (Football)	52.6	27	Nike
Kobe Bryant (Basketball)	23.5	26	Nike
Maria Sharapova (Tennis)	6.7	23	Nike (before January 2016), Head
Lionel Messi (Football)	51.8	22	Adidas
Usain Bolt (Track & Field)	15	21	Puma

Table n. 2: Top earning athletes sorted by the highest endorsement income (Forbes, 2016)

As it can be seen from the table above (Table n. 2), the most valuable endorsements are with no doubt made by Nike, Inc., as nine out of twelve most endorsed athletes in the world are it, ambassadors. It also shows, that except football players Cristiano Ronaldo and Lionel Messi, all the athletes have significantly higher income from endorsements rather than from their salaries and prizes. Moreover, all of them are active on their official social media accounts (Forbes, 2016).

Sponsorship is also an excellent tool for creating the artificial word-of-mouth. By endorsing the athletes with brand products, the company not only increases its credibility and awareness but also connects the brand with opinion leader. Ultimately, the athlete becomes an ambassador of the brand and consumers unconsciously tend to believe the message he or she is sharing.

## **7.2 Sponsorships of Events**

Sponsorship of events ensures huge visibility throughout traditional media, such as television, newspapers, and magazines, but also through social media presentation. Sporting goods brands are often ambassadors of various sports competitions, such as Olympic Games, World and Regional Championship in various sports, but also local competitions targeted towards common people, such as marathons and different types of local running events.

## **7.3 Cooperation with Celebrities**

Not only that celebrities are endorsed by products from the companies, such as Ellie Goulding by Nike, but the sporting goods producers also develop the whole lines of clothing in cooperation with them. The collaborations were held multiple times by Adidas, for example with British singer and performer Rita Ora, or by Puma while designing shoe line with Barbadian singer Rihanna. By those are brands getting massive brand exposure throughout the celebrities' media channels.

## **7.4 Cooperation with Sports Associations and Sports Teams**

By sponsoring or endorsing the whole sports association or sports team, companies are effectively targeting their stakeholders – not only active participants but also fans and spectators. By sponsoring sports associations or sports teams, the firms gain the possibility of creating wearable merchandise and increase their profit by selling it while simultaneously gaining brand visibility and exposure.

Ultimately, the brand is visible not only through official social media of the team but also on social media accounts of the fans and spectator.

## **7.5 Bloggers**

As bloggers' base is still emerging, some of the sporting goods producers gave the opportunity to local bloggers to wear their products, attend their events in exchange of propagation through their blog and social media channels.

In the Czech Republic, this strategy was tried by Nike, but as they have not experienced as high achievements as they have expected, they changed the focus on different social media strategies afterward. However, Adidas tried similar strategy at the beginning of 2016 while introducing new running shoes, but the results cannot be yet determined.

## **7.6 Events**

In order to increase the brand awareness, many companies are organizing social or sporting events, such as the launch of their new product, exercising conventions, free fitness lessons or running competitions or training.

## **7.7 Smartphone applications**

All of the major sporting goods brands, except Puma, developed their own or acquired smartphone applications. The own application enables them to “brand” the content shared through it on social media and gained more brand awareness. Another significant benefit is the ability to place commercial directly inside the platform.

# **8 What is the Effect of Social Media on Brands Recognition, Brand Loyalty, and Firms' Revenues?**

For firms, there is not only importance of strategy in terms of content and marketing consistency, but also regarding the financial investments and outcomes of social media strategies.

Brand recognition, one of the desirable deliveries of the social media marketing is basically the process of customers getting knowledgeable about the brand. According to Tiago & Verissimo (2014), brand awareness might be evaluated with the help of the measuring of “brand awareness, word-of-mouth buzz and web analytics”, such as tracking the performances of campaigns, page views, impressions and ultimately cost of the impressions and also click-through-rate. The brand awareness is usually the first impulse to making the purchase.

In contrast, brand loyalty is when a potential customer becomes returning customer. The brand loyalty is critical to company’s revenue, as the price for gaining a new customer is significantly higher than keeping one (Gamboa & Gonçalves, 2014). The company needs to nurture the existing relationship by further interacting with the customer while social media are the most effective tool how to accomplish that goal.

According to Bughin & Chui (as cited in Gamboa & Gonçalves, 2010), a few companies have already reported an increase of customer satisfaction and the brand loyalty due to social media and Web 2.0 in overall. However, having a large number of fans and followers on social media do not always mean a high number of customers. The main drivers to change the fans in customers are according to Gamboa & Gonçalves (2014) not only great content but also necessity for frequent posts and more than anything else answering to users, both to positive and negative comments.

However, the influence of social media, as it is a relatively new marketing tool, also needs a special way how to evaluate its influence on profits. According to Hoffman & Fodor, managers should forget about traditional return on investment calculation and rather focus on assessing motivations of the customers to share brand-related content

(2010). As this is the goal and purpose of social media – to establish a relationship with the customers which leads to long-term success (Hoffman & Fodor, 2010).

## **9 Social Media Strategies of Major Brands Operating the Sporting Goods Market**

### **9.1 Nike**

Nike is without the doubt the most successful brand, regarding a number of followers on social media and also in their revenue, which was more than 30.6 billion U.S. Dollars worldwide (Statista, 2016c). Nike is operating several global social media channels on each social media platforms, but also a few of localized accounts in each country where they have licensed distribution.

Nike successfully divides their customer base into segments, based on their demographics, such as age, sex and locality; and psychographics, such as their interest and the sport they perform.

Next to their general Nike profile with more than 24 million followers on Facebook (Nike, n.d.c) and almost 45 million of followers on Instagram (Nike, n.d.d), Nike is also operating Nike Women, Nike Running, Nike Sportswear, Nike Training, Nike Lab, Nike Skateboarding, Nike Golf, Nike Basketball, Nike Football, Nike Young Athletes, Nike Baseball, Nike Court and Nike Better World accounts (Instagram, 2016a).

With the addition of localized accounts, Nike informs not only about their innovations, new products, the success of sponsored athletes, but also encourages their fans and followers to take an action and share, comment or like their posts. Moreover, Nike organizes many events and causes and use their impact to raise the brand awareness and brand loyalty through social media. In general, Nike shares usually short motivational

messages or pictures which are encouraging they fans and followers to discuss their products.

As the most successfully used tools by Nike according to their impact might be considered following.

### **9.1.1 Nike Running**

Nike was always searching for groundbreaking innovations which could differentiate it from other sporting goods brands, especially in long term. After the introduction of first air-cushioned shoes, there was a necessity for something even more appealing (Sanussi, Lazarev, Jorgensen, Latsanych, Badtiev 2014). After the introduction of iPhones and iPods, the current interest of consumers was in electronic gadgets and devices. As the first of its kind, Nike introduced in cooperation with Apple the Nike+ technology, which allowed setting the base for the Nike Running community (Sanussi, Lazarev, Jorgensen, Latsanych, Badtiev 2014).

The Nike+ technology enables the athlete to see the speed, distance and other specifics, such as incline, of his or her running workout. Firstly, it was introduced as a special chip which had to be inserted in special Nike+ shoe and another add-on, which had to be plugged-in iPod (Sanussi, Lazarev, Jorgensen, Latsanych, Badtiev 2014). Later, the device was replaced by armband without the necessity of owning iPod, then by GPS watch and most recently, Nike Running App was introduced for iPhones and Android devices.

However, the ultimate success does not lie in the introduction of the new technology itself, but merely in the possibility of sharing the run with the whole Nike community through a personal computer or even directly through the smartphone application, or with the users' audiences on social media networks.



Nike Running application not only enables measure the distance and speed of the run but also to share the map and picture from the run to social media. As the athlete choose to share the picture to social media, the Nike Running application offers him or her to include the pictogram of the distance he or she ran, but also non-optionally includes the “swoosh” mark and hashtag #nikerunning to every made post. As the application is free and it offers similar features as those who are paid, it is often used by athletes who do not even own any Nike apparel and makes every single of their post Nike advertisement.

To ensure the highest exposure of the Nike Running sub-brand, Nike, Inc. is also running global Nike Running Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and Twitter accounts, but also organizes several events, both local and global.

In the Czech Republic, Nike organizes running club with regular training on a weekly basis while generating a significant number of posts about its activities, made by the company itself or by the participants. However, the major success was the running competition We Run Prague organized for four consecutive years from 2011 to 2014 (Narovec, 2015).

The 10 kilometers long run throughout the city center of Prague attracted every year almost 10,000 runners, especially young women. All of the competitors were given special t-shirts as a part of their starting pack with the chosen motto and Nike “swoosh” logo in front and on its back. As the competitors were sharing their posts with suggested hashtag “werunprague,” the Nike was able to achieve more than 150,000 impressions through Instagram in 2014, and gaining more than 800 shares (Instagram, n.d.).

The overall usage of the #nikerunning hashtag on Instagram was more than two million on 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2016 (Instagram, n.d.) and was tweeted on Twitter 1,500 times.

## **9.2 Nike Women**

The Nike Women initiative was launched as a response to growing interest of women in sports, especially in running and fitness. Next to clothing line and social media channels on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, which are presenting new physical products, such as shoes and sports apparel, Nike Women is a whole platform of goods and services offering its users ultimate sporting experience.

Part of the Nike Women portfolio is Nike Training Club. Nike Training Club was introduced as an alternative to the traditional gym in the form of a smartphone application. Nike in cooperation with top authorities from the world of women exercises developed series of 15 to 45 minutes long sessions. Those sessions were recorded in the form of videos with Nike female ambassadors and can be played only through the application. All the athletes are wearing Nike apparel. The most popular videos were taken with famous athletes, such as tennis players Maria Sharapova or Serena Williams, Olympic gold medal winner in gymnastics Gabrielle Douglas, or with celebrities, such as singer and performer Ellie Goulding (Nike Training Club, n.d.).

Based on its success of Nike Training Club Application in the Czech Republic, Nike organized a unique concept of free training sessions based on the content of the application which was held in an original environment of a houseboat on the Vltava River in Prague. Moreover, all of the participants were able to borrow Nike products for their routine and received a discount on their purchase in Nike Prague.

However, the most measurable success was the social media impressions Nike Women sub-brand which was Nike able to get throughout the period the lessons were available (more than four months). The Nike Women sub-brand and Nike, in general, gained 60

% more impressions than in the period before the launching of the studios (Socialbakers, 2016b).

Moreover, Nike launched a few successful campaigns connecting both traditional ways of marketing with digital and social media campaigns. Among the most successful are “Make The Day Count” and “Better for It”. “Make It Count” with series of short videos and visuals should inspire millennials to live their life to the fullest, not only in terms of adventures and enjoying every moment, but also regarding sports and sports activities. The “Make It Count” slogan also suggested the customers to “count” their activities with Nike tracking apps.

Campaign “Better for It, ” was launched in 2015 and was supposed to illustrate the inner struggle of women during the exercise and how those became strong by overcoming it, emphasizing the necessity to overcome the obstacles on their way to self-improvement. At the beginning of 2016, this campaign was completed by first-ever scripted YouTube series “Margot & Lilly” illustrating the unusual conflict between athleticism and social life (AdWeek, 2015). However, this campaign is a major shift from previous Nike initiatives, as it for the first time present women or an athlete with all of her fallacies, rather than superwomen capable of doing anything with no stress.

### **9.2.1 Sponsorships**

Nike, Inc. is endorsing a very large number of athletes and teams both globally and locally. In general, they are choosing successful and visually appealing athletes, who fit with their brand story, and he or she is performing sport which is covered in Nike’s portfolio of products. Moreover, the majority of them are also very active and popular on social media networks. Nike-endorsed athletes are ones of the most followed sportsmen and sportswomen in the world (Socialbakers, 2016).

However, as it can be seen in the following survey, these idols Nike is choosing are very convincing for customers from Western countries, but in order to increase the brand loyalty in Eastern countries, such as in the Czech Republic, the choices have to be localized and matching the taste of the consumers. As an example, the main women Nike ambassador for the Czech Republic is tennis player Petra Kvitová. However, her followers on social media are mainly men above the age of 30 (Socialbakers, 2016c), and if the purpose of Nike's campaign is to attract youth girls to purchase their clothing, it might not be the well-chosen spokesperson to achieve that goal. A better choice might be for example Czech snowboarder, and Olympic winner Eva Samková, whose fan base has significantly lower age average and the majority of them is from the Czech Republic.

### **9.2.2 Nike Support**

Another way how is Nike effectively establishing and maintaining a relationship with its customers is through Nike Support. Nike is not connected with its clients only through traditional ways of communication, such as e-mail or phone, they are also offering almost 24-hour assistance through social media. Nike's assistants are willing to help with anything from choosing the right shoe for running precisely according to customers' needs to solving a problem with dysfunction of smartphone application (Nike, n.d.a).

Moreover, they are also reacting to a large number of posts on all types of social network. By replying to a Facebook comment, retweeting or a replying to the tweet with Nike hashtag or even by liking the picture on Instagram, Nike is strengthening their connection with their customers and makes them feel special.

### **9.3 Adidas**

In overall, Adidas' and Nike's strategies are very similar. Both of them are centered around their products, which are very well developed and designed, so they are easy to sell, and both of these brands are valuable (2016b).

Similarly, they focus on great content and divide their audience into several groups according to their interest by running a few Facebook, Twitter or Instagram channels based on their products lines, such as Adidas, Adidas Neo, Adidas Originals, Adidas Women, Adidas Running or Adidas Football (Socialbakers, 2016d).

However, the main difference is that Adidas' marketing strategies far less aggressive than those of Nike. It might be caused by the different company's background, as Nike comes from American culture while Adidas is a European brand.

The main difference is that Nike's focus is on their endorsed athletes and connecting their products and brands with them. In comparison, Adidas is more focused on their corporate image in overall and distributing their products to all sorts of athletes – from those on beginners to those on the competition level.

#### **9.3.1 Sponsorships**

While not building their customers' loyalty and brand awareness majorly on sponsoring and endorsing athletes, Adidas still have very impressive names in their portfolio, such as football player Lionel Messi, tennis players Novak Djokovic and Caroline Wozniacki, or even Czech athletes Tomáš Berdych and Petr Čech. Moreover, they are sponsoring a large number of teams and individuals (Adidas, n.d.).

In. Addition, Adidas is an official partner of UEFA, Union of European Football Associations, and FIFA, Fédération Internationale de Football Association, and provides, for example, official balls for European and World Championship. Adidas is

also a partner of Olympic Games and since the acquisition of Reebok also take over the official sponsorship of NBA, National Basketball League (Adidas, n.d.).

### **9.3.2 Running**

With the introduction of Adidas Boost technology for running shoes in the Czech Republic, Adidas began to organize similar events to Nike's ones, such as running training and sponsoring running events, such as Prague Marathon (Adidas, n.d.).

With the acquisition of Runtastic application is Adidas also trying to build a running community, similar to Nike Running, however as the acquisition is relatively new, no steps were yet undertaken (Roberts, 2015).

### **9.3.3 Adidas women**

Adidas' channel Adidas women is very similar in content and also visually to Nike women. After the success of Nike's different campaigns, such as "Make It Count" or "Better for It", Adidas is trying to spread the similar message among their potential customers with a campaign targeted to women "I am here to create". Series of short videos with professional athletes, such as Caroline Wozniacki, and supermodel Karlie Kloss, who used to be Nike ambassador, is supposed to enhance the creativity of athletes while performing different types of sports (Pasquarelli, 2016).

### **9.3.4 Cooperation with fashion designers and celebrities**

Adidas cooperates in long-term with fashion designer Stella McCartney on creating a designer sporting line. Moreover, in short term Adidas cooperates with celebrities, as the most successful cooperation might be considered those with British singer and performer Rita Ora and American hip-hop artist Kanye West.

As Kanye West is controversial personality and very active on social media, its cooperation with Adidas on creating the Yeezy Shoe created enormous social media

buzz and even outrun Nike by its social media mentions in the weekend after its launch (Roberts, 2016).

## **9.4 Reebok**

In history, Reebok was facing many difficulties with social media presence, as there were many Reebok-related channels, usually founded by fans and Reebok had no control over them (Pathak, 2015). Since that time, the presence of Reebok on social media changed majorly. Currently, the number of Reebok followers is growing even faster than Nike's. As their social media leader Ben Blakesley claimed, they more focusing on Instagram, as their organic content is not working well with Facebook policies (as cited in Pathak, 2015).

The most growing social media audiences are Reebok women and those tied-in with Reebok endorsed sports associations, CrossFit, UFC - Ultimate Fighting Championship in mixed martial arts, and Spartan Race (Pathak, 2016).

### **9.4.1 CrossFit**

CrossFit is the most fast-growing sport in the U.S. and in 2010 CrossFit signed ten years long contract with Reebok on partnership. The world championship in CrossFit is called Reebok CrossFit Games while all participating athletes are endorsed with complete Reebok apparel. Moreover, other brands are banned from the official Reebok CrossFit competitions, as Nike developed rival shoe to Reebok official CrossFit shoe Nano, Nike Metcon.

The connection of Reebok with CrossFit brings major exposure to both brands. As CrossFit is a sport based on community aspect, Reebok by being the official brand of the sport have access to the huge target market. Moreover, the top CrossFit athletes,

whom themselves have a huge audience on social media are endorsed with Reebok products.

The social media campaign “Be More Human” was ultimately based on the potential and philosophy of CrossFit, even as it was broadened to other aspects of the brand.

“Be More Human” campaign served to inspire the consumers to live their life to full potential, which is very similar to Nike’s campaign “Make It Count.”

#### **9.4.2 UFC**

Another Reebok cooperation with emerging sports branch is a partnership with Ultimate Fighting Championship. Reebok is fully endorsing their top athletes who became A-list celebrities due massive commercialization of UFC, such as former Olympic medalist Ronda Rousey and Irish fighter Conor McGregor.

### **9.5 Under Armour**

The main purpose of all Under Armour social media activities is to differentiate itself from Nike and Adidas. As in U.S., they have already overcome with their sales Adidas and being a serious competitor to Nike (Statista, 2015a), their popularity in Europe is still evolving.

Under Armour is cooperating with very famous athletes, but the majority of them are more famous on the American market, rather than on the European or even on the Czech one. The most prominent faces of Under Armour in Europe are Tom Brady, Michael Phelps, Lindsey Vonn or supermodel Gisele Bündchen. All of them were starring their super successful campaign “I Will What I Want” which was even awarded at Cannes Film Festival. The campaign emphasizes the power of will and that if a person truly wants, he or she can accomplish whatever he or she desires.



## **9.6 Puma**

While choosing their ambassadors, Puma is targeting two totally different groups of the customers. Professional or semi-professional athletes and their fans by generous sponsorships of football players and football teams, both national and league club teams and top track & field athletes, such as Usain Bolt. However, regarding football propagation, nowadays they are missing their top star, who could influence broad audience as their former endorsed athletes, such as Diego Maradona or Pelé.

As their long-term goal is to become the most successful lifestyle brand in the world (Puma, n.d.), their second target audience is their potential customers. By collaboration with mainstream celebrities, such as Rihanna or recently with a reality show personality Kylie Jenner. However, this inconsistency in their marketing and social media strategy is very damaging for the brand, as contemporary customers from the first target market react very negatively to reality show performer becoming a face of the brand.

Puma also tried to divide their audience with running different accounts, such as Puma, Puma Golf or Puma Motorsport, as they are the official provider of apparel for Formula One team Scuderia Ferrari (Puma, n.d.).

Moreover, content of their official Facebook accounts is not very original or interesting, as it is mainly focused only on two aspects of Puma brand – football and lifestyle

## **10 Survey**

For the purposes of finding the consumers preferences and social media usage regarding sport and sporting goods, an internet survey was held. The survey took place from 21<sup>st</sup> April until 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2016. The overall number of 66 respondents was answering to questions regarding their preferred sports activities, sporting goods brands and social media usage regarding sporting goods brands.

## 10.1 The Structure of the Survey

The survey was run in the form of Google Docs Form and consisted of 33 questions divided into four sections - Demographics, Sports, Sports Equipment and Social Media.

The survey was shared with respondents through Facebook, in personal messages, on the timeline and also in Facebook groups related to sports and sports activities. The link to the survey was clicked 106 times and delivered 66 responses. The whole form can be seen in the appendix (Appendix A).

## 10.2 The Respondents of the Survey

Out of the 66 respondents, 51.5 % were men and 48.5 % women. According to the age group, the highest number of respondents was between the age of 18 and 26, 50 % in total (Figure n. 2). That means that the half of the respondents are highly responsive to marketing campaigns, ultimately to social media marketing, as this is the generation of millennials.

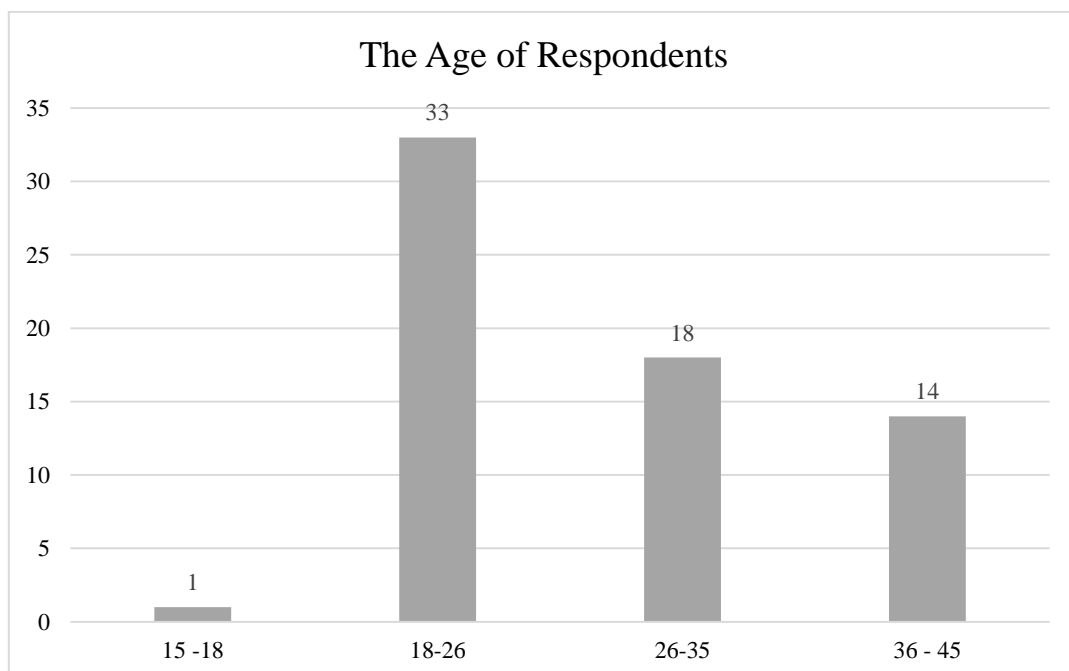


Figure n. 2: The Age of Respondents of the Survey

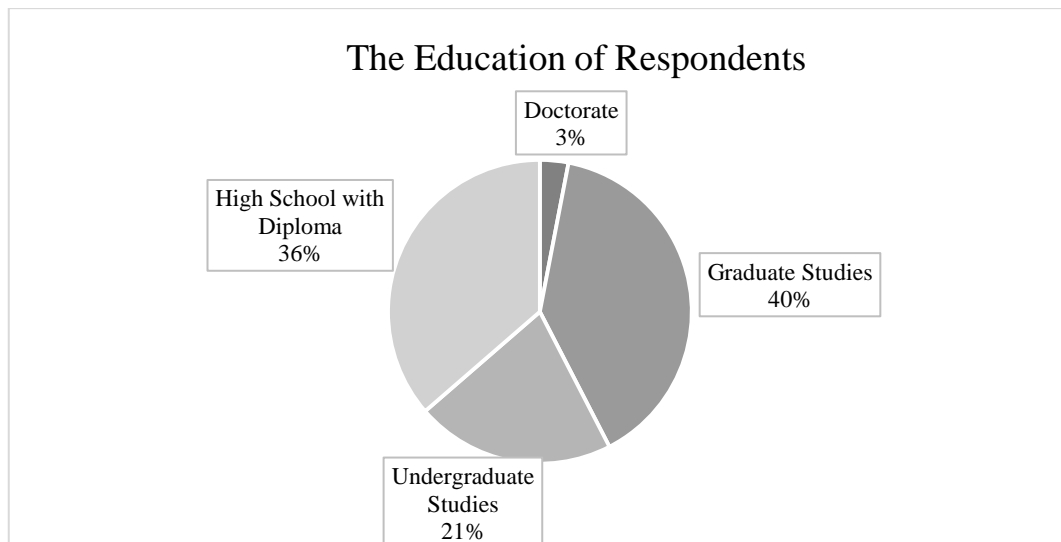


Figure n. 3: The Education of Respondents

As it can be seen in the figure above (Figure n. 3), all of the respondents obtained a minimally high school education, and it can be implied according to their age, that their studies are in majority not finished yet. The largest number of respondents obtained graduate degrees, altogether 40 %, 21 % finished undergraduate studies, and 36 % completed high school with a diploma.

All of the respondents currently reside in the Czech Republic, although there are several nationalities among them. As the majority of them is still Czech or Slovak, some of the participants are Russian, Hungarian, or even American (Figure n. 4).

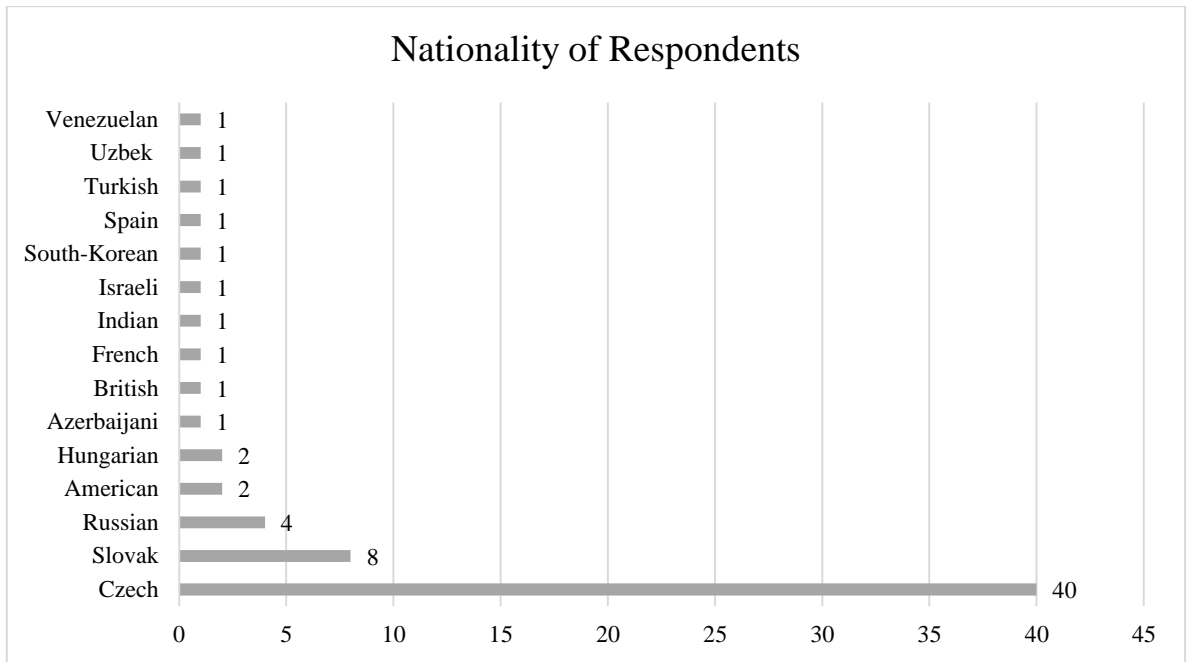


Figure n. 4: Nationalities of respondents

Regarding the place of living, more than 75 % of all respondents live in the capital city of the Czech Republic, Prague, and more than 90 % of respondents live in a city with more than 100,000 inhabitants or in a town. Only 13.6 % participants live in the village.

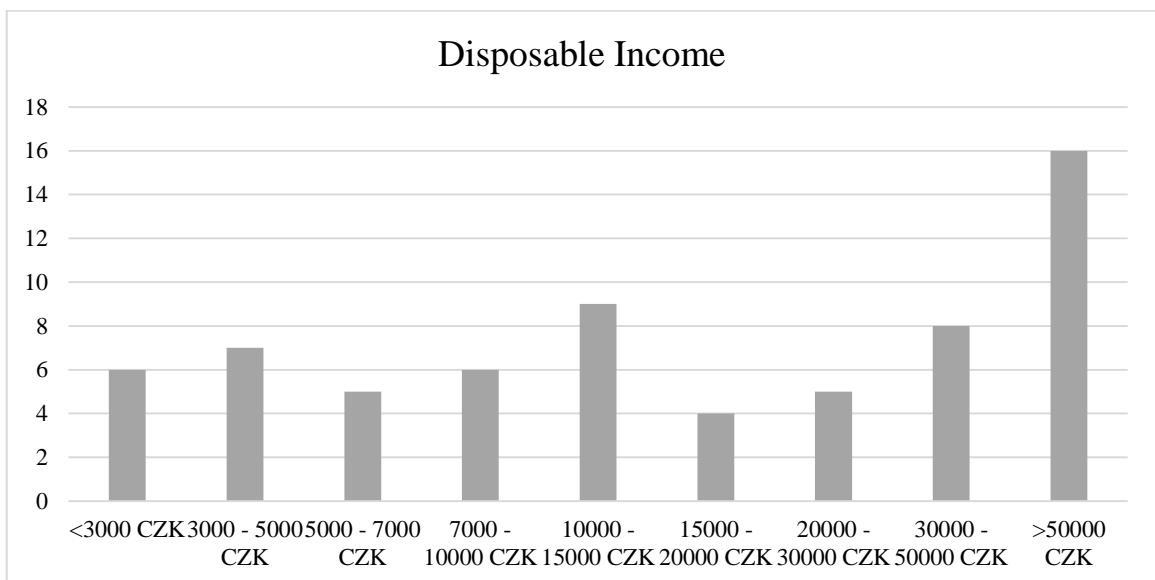


Figure n. 5: Disposable Income

As the average disposable income per capita in the Czech Republic is approximately 17,000 CZK (Gola, 2013), half of the respondents' disposable income is above average and half of them is younger than 26 years and

possibly still studying, it might be implied that some of their purchases are still paid by their parents and not from their disposable personal income.

### 10.3 Favorite Sports and Frequency of Performing Them

The highest number of respondents, more than 40 %, performs sports activities more than three times per week while none of the respondents claimed that he or she does not perform sports at all. Other 27 % of participants claimed that they perform sports activities several times per week, but less than three times.

Regarding the sports which are performed by respondents, they were given 17 different options of sports activities plus a choice of other, where they were free to insert any sport which was not listed. The most favorite sports were running, CrossFit, cycling, gym training and working (Figure n. 6).

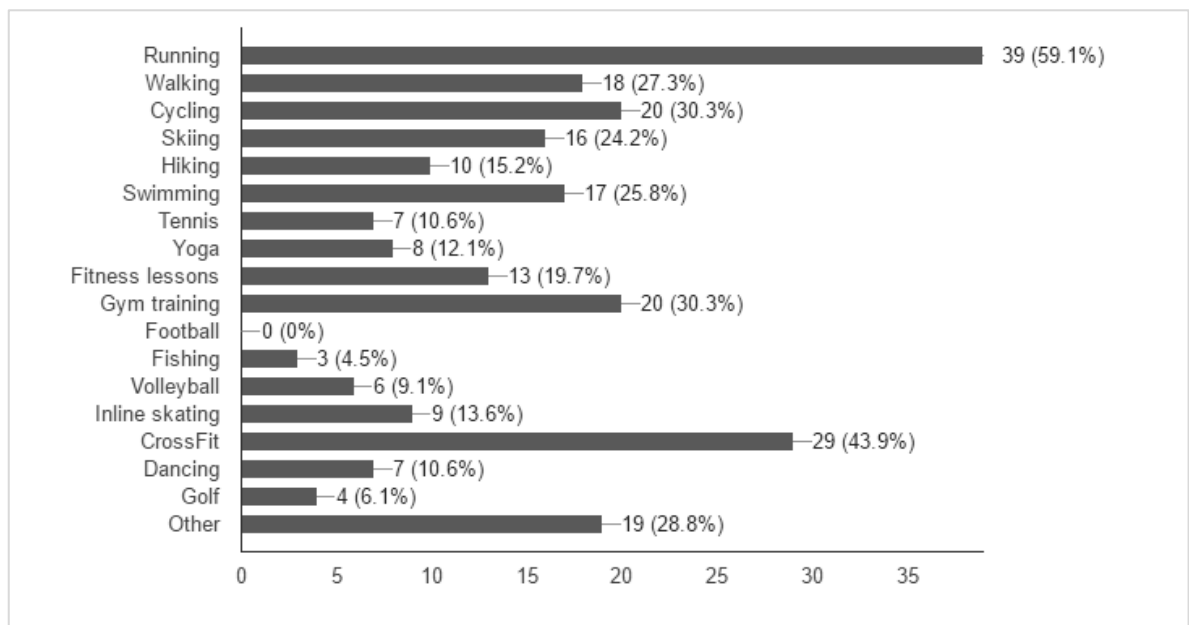


Figure n. 6: Type of Sports Performed by Respondents

Other sports participants mentioned which were not listed are: Box and Kickbox, Wall Climbing and Climbing, Martial Arts, Squash, Surfing, Frisbee, Pilates, and Futnet.

More than 70 % of respondents also have active membership in any type of sports facility, while 55 % consider themselves as an athletic type, and almost half of them follow a healthy diet.

#### 10.4 Sports Equipment and Their Purchasing

92 % of respondents purchase specialized equipment for the sport they do while nearly 40 % more than for one type of sports activities. Regarding the expenditures on sporting equipment, the most of the respondents, 27.3 %, spend between 3000 and 5000 CZK on sporting goods per year. Only seven participants spend less than 3000 CZK, and two people spend between 20000 and 50000 CZK per year, which was the highest chosen value (Figure n.7). 40 % of respondents shop for goods for one to three times per year and nearly 30 % shop three to six times per year.

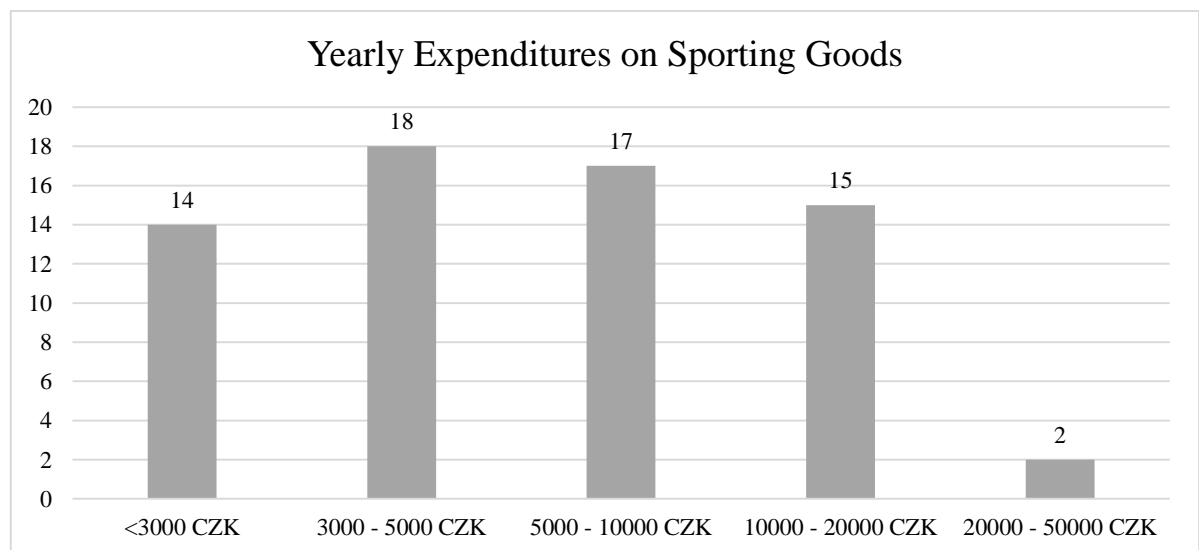


Figure n. 7: Yearly Expenditures on Sporting Goods

While deciding which part of sporting gear is the most important, majority of 65 % of respondents claims that right shoes are the most necessary equipment, 18 % tools, such as tennis racket, bike or skates; and 9 % have chosen clothing. The rest of 8 % chosen the option “Other” and named such items as protective gear or claimed that it depends on the type of the sport they are performing. That implies that in terms of investment,

people willingly invest relatively more money in their shoes than in any other kind of sports equipment.

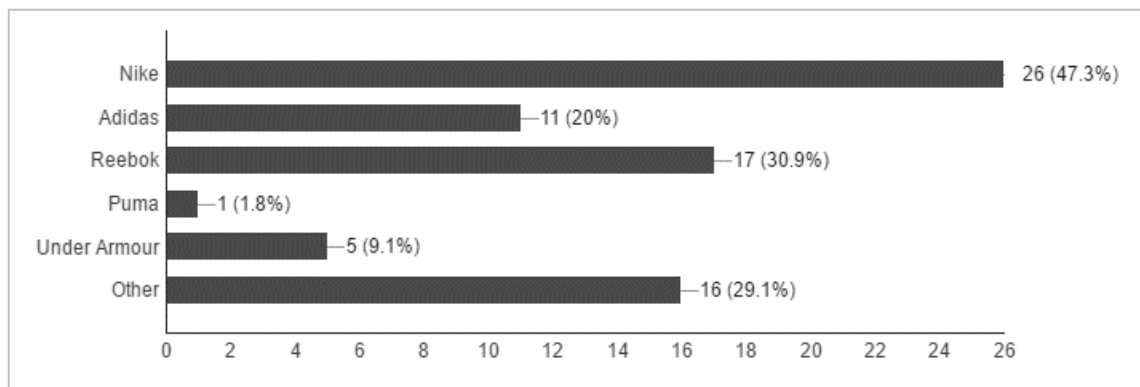


Figure n. 8: Favorite Brands among Respondents

In a question regarding the favorite brands of sporting goods, respondents were able to choose multiple brands and also list those which were not available. As it can be seen in the figure above (Figure n. 8), the most favored brand among all respondents is Nike, as it was chosen by 47.3 % of respondents. The second most popular was Reebok, chosen by 30 % of people. The least favored brand from the top global sporting goods firm is Puma, as it was chosen only by one person.

Other brands which were chosen by respondents as they favorites were Asics which was listed twice, Salomon, Mizuno, Czech shoe brand Botas, Head and 21 respondents claimed that they have no preferred brand.

Moreover, more than 65 % of the participants use sporting equipment, especially clothing and shoes in their daily outfit. Trainers or sneakers are used by 60 %, sporting sweatshirt by 47 %, sports jacket by 40 %, and sweatpants by 39 %.

### **10.5 Purchasing of Sporting Goods**

More 80 % of respondents prefer to purchase their sporting goods offline in stone stores rather than in online shops.

The most favored type of sports shops is global sporting goods chains offering a wide range of different products for different sports activities – nearly 38 % of respondents chose them as a choice number one. However, only 21 % of respondents claimed them as their favorite venue for shopping sporting goods. The global chains, such as Sportissimo, Hervis' Sport or A3 sport are highly accessible, as they were opened in recent years in almost every shopping center. In comparison to brand or specialized stores, they also offer various discounts more often and special sales promotion. They are also ideal for a customer with no brand preference, who is rather price-sensitive (66 % of respondents claimed that they decide according to price more likely than according to brand) or to customers who are performing sports recreationally in low volume.

Regarding popularity, global chains are followed by specialized shops selling goods for single sports, such as running or cycling store, which are the most visited by 32 % of respondents. Brand stores are the preferred venue for 21 % of participants. However, brand stores are not as accessible as other types of shops and their prices are slightly higher. Moreover, they offer sales and special discounts only a few times per year.

As other choices for making the purchases were included by respondents such options as Tesco or H&M, which are not originally sporting goods providers, but they have introduced their lines of sporting clothing and other accessories recently. H&M Sport very popular in the Czech Republic, as the worldwide ambassador of the brand, was Czech tennis player Tomáš Berdych (Ghosh, 2016).

More than 50 % of respondents claimed that they do online research before making the purchase, and nearly 38 % read a review on the product in magazine or newspapers. However, while entering the store, almost 60 % decide only by themselves while only 12 % listen to the advice of the shop assistant. In correlation with the most favorite



shopping venue, people who are customers of specialized stores, such as running or cycling stores, tend to discuss the choice of their product with shop assistant, suggesting, that because of narrower range of products and focus on one discipline they are more knowledgeable about the features of the goods.

## **10.6 Social Media and Sporting Goods**

39 out of 66 respondents claimed that they follow any sporting goods brand on social media networks. Most of them, 27, almost 70 %, use for those purposes Facebook, as Facebook, is still the social media network with the highest penetration, more than 40 %, in the Czech Republic (Socialbakers, 2016b). The second most popular network was Instagram, used by 13 respondents and most of them were between the age of 18 and 26. That implies, that Instagram is very popular among young people and enables them to share a high number of brands without disturbing. Video channel YouTube use seven respondents to follow brands they are interested in. However, surprising is that only one person uses Twitter, and only one person uses Snapchat to follow sporting goods brands. Snapchat is very new in the Czech Republic, so it is still gaining its popularity, but the result of Twitter is quite disappointing, as it exists for almost as long time as Facebook. For comparison, the Nike Running account for the Czech Republic is followed by nearly 70, 000 people from the Czech Republic, while on Twitter there are only 169 followers (Socialbakers, 2016b). In conclusion, while sharing the video content in the Czech Republic, rather than use special video platforms, such as Snapchat or YouTube, it is necessary to secure the appearance of post on Facebook.

The most popular brand was Nike, followed by 27 respondents. That means that even people who do not consider Nike as their favorite brand, follow its activities through social media and enables to Nike's marketers influence their loyalty to other brand and purchasing decisions.

The second favorite brand was Reebok, followed by 14 people, 41 % of respondents who follow sporting goods brands through social media. As Adidas is in general perceived as more popular and Reebok is not even offered in such a high number of venues, Reebok's growing popularity might be connected with the increasing popularity of CrossFit, sport fully endorsed by Reebok, as 29 of respondents actively perform CrossFit as their recreational sport.

However, Adidas is followed only by eight respondents, majorly by man over 30 years old. To address the low interaction with the brand Adidas launched large social media campaign targeted to young women in cooperation with former Miss World Taťána Kuchařová and famous Czech teenage bloggers, such as A Cup of Style or Dblog.cz (RunCzech, 2014).

Under Armour is followed by four people what might be connected with the short presence of the brand on the Czech market and the lack of their official selling venues. However, Puma which is sold in every global store is not followed by anyone. That is not surprising as Puma has a terrible reputation in the Czech Republic based on the demographics group of their customers.

Other companies which were listed by respondents are Victoria Secret Sport and Salomon.

Even though some respondents do not follow the sporting goods brand on social media, social networks are the main channel how they receive the information about new products and innovations, almost 78 %. The second most popular source of information was traditional word-of-mouth, as they were discussing the products with their friends or people from their sports clubs. As the traditional media, such as television or magazines, were chosen only by three people, they are not a very effective choice for

sporting goods firms to invest their advertising budget. Moreover, more than 55 % of respondents that they value opinions and reviews on the social media while deciding which product and which brand they want to purchase.

## 10.7 Brands and Their Ambassadors

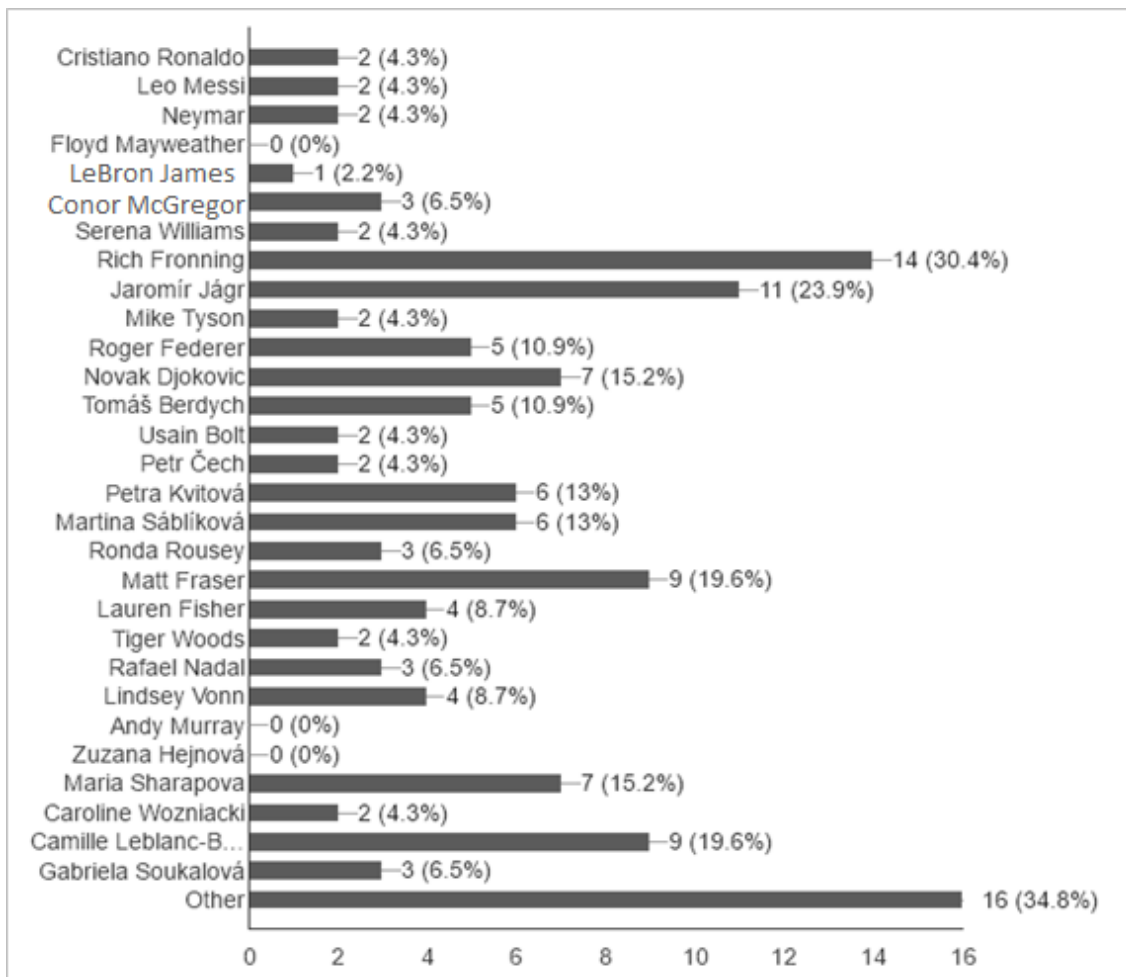


Figure n. 9: Famous Athletes and Their Followers

The respondents were given 29 sportsmen or sportswomen, who are Czech, endorsed by a brand of sporting goods or one of the athletes with the most followers worldwide. They were also free to add any other sportswomen or sportsmen they follow through social media.

### **10.7.1 Reebok athletes**

The most followed athlete is Rich Froning, who was followed by 14 respondents. Rich Froning is the four-time consecutive world champion in the sport of CrossFit while he is the official ambassador of Reebok and their CrossFit equipment. The reason why he is so popular among respondents is that 29 of them perform CrossFit actively as the sport of their choice. Other CrossFit athlete sponsored by Reebok listed above are Camille Leblanc-Bazinet, who is followed by nine respondents.

Connor McGregor and Ronda Rousey are both UFC, an association of Ultimate Fighting Championship, athletes performing mixed martial arts. Both of them are Reebok ambassadors. Moreover the UFC association is endorsed by Reebok.

Another former sportsperson from the list who is former Reebok spokesperson is legendary Czech ice hockey player, Jaromír Jágr.

As it might be seen, the cooperation of Reebok with emerging sports branches and associations as CrossFit and UFC is highly successful, both globally and locally. Even though none of the CrossFit and UFC listed athletes are Czech, and they still earn more followers in the Czech Republic than excellent Czech athlete Zuzana Hejnová.

### **10.7.2 Nike athletes**

As the results of Nike's social media marketing are very impressive in terms of a number of followers, they do not have any strong ambassador on the Czech market. Its worldwide stars such as Cristiano Ronaldo (two followers), Roger Federer (five followers), Rafael Nadal (three followers) or Serena Williams (two followers) do not have such a strong fan base in the Czech Republic. Maria Sharapova, who is no longer sponsored by Nike after her doping scandal in January 2016, is followed by seven

respondents. However, CrossFit athletes Lauren Fisher and Matthew Fraser, who are both Nike ambassadors are followed by 4 and 9 out of the respondents.

However, other Nike-sponsored athletes, who are even Czech, such as Zuzana Hejnová and Petra Kvitová, who are both very successful in the sports they perform, were not very favored among the respondents while having zero and six followers.

Other Nike ambassadors, such as LeBron James, Neymar or Tiger Woods did not have more than two followers on social media.

### **10.7.3 Adidas athletes**

There were several Adidas endorsed athletes on the list, such as worldwide football superstar Lionel Messi, Czech excellent goalkeeper Petr Čech or tennis player Caroline Wozniacki each had two followers. As all of them are faces of localized campaigns in the Czech Republic, Adidas should think about replacing them with tennis player Novak Djokovic, who had seven followers, or in terms of women try to find another ambassador for the Czech Republic.

Tomáš Berdych, who is Czech tennis player, is also Adidas ambassador. However he is not used in any Adidas commercials and social media activities while he is still quite popular with five respondents out of 46 respondents who follow athletes on social media.

### **10.7.4 Under Armour Athletes**

There are two athletes endorsed by Under Armour on the list. Austrian skier, Lindsey Vonn is not only very popular in Europe, moreover, is often chosen as a model for sports themed magazines, such as Sports Illustrated. She is followed by four respondents, which is quite high in consideration with that she is not performing the

mainstream sport, such as tennis, which would have high television screening and media coverage in overall in the Czech Republic.

However, Andy Murray, who is Under Armour ambassador, is not followed by any respondent from the survey. In spite the fact that he is number 2 on the worldwide tennis rankings, his popularity is very low, as one of the respondents stated probably because of his unsympathetic behavior.

## **10.8 Smartphone Applications**

The market of the smartphone applications which enable measuring of sports activities is still growing. The success of Nike Running inspired both Adidas and Under Armour to acquire applications of their own and increase the brand awareness and brand loyalty through them.

Nike Running application is used by 26 respondents out of 44 who claimed that they use smartphone applications for tracking their performance. Moreover, 8 of them use Nike Training Club application in addition to Nike Running. The interesting fact is that official Nike apps are also used by people who did not listed Nike as their favorite brand and by those who tend to share their sports activities on social media channels. The interface of Nike application is in comparison with other applications very motivating to share the contents with the clients' peers, as it offers the possibility to compare and even to compete with them. In addition, the application enables to share pictures with Nike logos on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and even on the microblogging site Tumblr with Nike pictograms.

Other applications which were mentioned multiple times are Endomondo and Runtastic. The main advantage of Endomondo over Nike Running is that it offers a wide range of sports possible to be tracked, such as cycling or skiing, however, as one of the

respondents mentioned, it is much more expensive than other available applications, as it costs more than 5 Euros. Endomondo is used by five respondents out of 44 who claimed they use tracking applications. However, Endomondo users of the survey tend to not share their activities through social media, so for possible acquisition to increase social media appearance of the brand the investor would have to implement necessary changes to motivate the users to share the content.

Runtastic, which was recently acquired by Adidas Group (Roberts, 2015) is used by 13 respondents. As it might seem, Runtastic is not an application for running, but the company has also developed several other mutations, such as for push up, squats or pull up counting. As this acquirement is relatively new, Adidas have not yet taken any action with promoting their brand or product on the app, secondary on social media.

## **11 Conclusion**

The world sporting goods market is in long-term divided among five competitors. Nike is currently operating the largest part of the market. However, the newest from the worldwide firms, Under Armour, is the fastest emerging and potentially threatening Nike's position as the global number one. Reebok and Adidas, both companies of Adidas Group perfectly complement each other. Adidas is more focusing on the corporate culture, tradition of the brand while Reebok is quickly developing by cooperating with emerging new sports.

In conclusion, all of the sporting goods firms' social media strategies are centered on their products, while dividing their audience into several segments according to their interests by creating several social media accounts. All of their campaigns do have motivational context, while each of them focus on the slightly different type of an athlete, according to their brand story.

Due the change of social expectations, the lifestyle brands of the companies are growing in popularity and broadening the number of potential customers.

In addition, social media enable to share electronic word-of-mouth as an alternative to face-to-face communication while still preserving all of its benefits for both customers and firms.

Very important part of their campaigns are the ambassadors, as they can positively and negatively influence the brand. The key is to choose an athlete or personality, with whom can the customers easily identify themselves and who match the overall brand story.

As more than a half of respondents of the survey claimed, that they have purchased or consider purchasing a product seen used by an athlete, the firms should really focus which athletes they want to endorse both locally and globally, as according to Gamboa and Gonçalves, “firms need to realize that social media is global and local at the same time” (2014).

Another trend of sporting goods companies is developing or acquiring and brand existing sports tracking apps.



## 12 Appendix A

### Thesis Survey - Sporting Goods

#### Demographics

What is your gender?

- Female
- Male

What is your age?

- <15
- 15 -18
- 18-26
- 26-35
- 36 - 45
- 46 - 55
- 56 - 65
- >66

What is your highest level of education?

- Elementary School
- Secondary vocational school
- High School
- High School with Diploma ("maturita")
- Undergraduate Studies
- Graduate Studies
- Doctorate

What is your nationality?

In which region of Czech Republic do you live?

- Hlavní město Praha
- Jihočeský
- Jihomoravský
- Karlovarský
- Kraj Vysočina
- Královéhradecký
- Liberecký
- Moravskoslezský
- Olomoucký
- Pardubický
- Plzeňský
- Středočeský
- Ústecký
- Zlínský

Do you reside in...

- City (more than 100, 000 inhabitants)
- Town
- Village

What is your monthly disposable income?

- <3000 CZK
- 3000-5000 CZK
- 5000-7000 CZK
- 7000-10000 CZK
- 10000-15000 CZK
- 15000-20000 CZK
- 20000 - 30000 CZK
- 30000 -50000 CZK
- >50000 CZK

### **Sports**

- Do you perform any sports? If yes, how often?
- No.
- Several times per year.
- On monthly basis.
- On weekly basis.
- Several times per week.
- More than 3 times per week.

What kind of sports do you perform?

- Running
- Walking
- Cycling
- Skiing
- Hiking
- Swimming
- Tennis
- Yoga
- Fitness lessons
- Gym training
- Football
- Fishing
- Volleyball
- Inline skating
- CrossFit
- Dancing
- Golf
- Other: Your answer.

Do you have active membership in any type of sports facilities?

- Yes

- No

Do you consider yourself as an athletic type?

- Yes
- No

Do you follow healthy diet?

- Yes
- No
- Other: Your answer.

Do you purchase any specialized sporting equipment?

*For example running shoes, cycling shorts, fitness clothing, yoga pants,...*

- Yes
- Yes, for several sports
- No

How much do you spend on your sports equipment per year?

- <3000 CZK
- 3000 - 5000 CZK
- 5000 - 10000 CZK
- 10000 - 20000 CZK
- 20000 - 50000 CZK
- >50000 CZK

How often do you purchase any type of sporting goods?

- Less than once a year
- 1-3 times a year
- 3-6 times a year
- Every two months
- Monthly
- More than once per month

What do you consider as the most important equipment, while performing sport?

- Shoes
- Clothing
- Tools (e.g. bike, racket)
- Other: Your answer.

Do you have any preferred brand of sporting equipment?

- Nike
- Adidas
- Reebok
- Puma
- Under Armour
- Other

Do you use sporting equipment also in your daily life?

- Yes, I use them regularly.
- Yes, but only occasionally.
- No, I use them only for their original purpose.

If yes, please choose which:

- Trainers
- Sweatpants
- Sporting sweatshirt
- Jacket (skiing, running or outdoor jacket)
- Hiking shoes
- Other: Your answer.

### **Purchasing Sporting Goods**

How do you purchase your sporting equipment?

- Online
- Offline

Most often you purchase them in... \*

- Global sport shop (Sportisimo, Hervis, A3 Sport,...)
- Brand shop (Nike, Adidas, Puma,...)
- Specialized shop (running, skiing,...)
- Other: Your answer.

Before the purchase...

- I do online research (official webpage, social media,...).
- I read reviews for the product I want to purchase.
- I decide by myself in the shop what I want and need.
- I listen to the advice of shop assistant.

What is more determining factor for you to make a choice?

- Price
- Brand

What is your favorite sporting goods shop/e-shop in Czech Republic?

### **Social Media**

Do you follow any sporting brand on social media? If yes, through which channel?

- Facebook
- Instagram
- Snapchat
- Twitter

- YouTube
- Other: Your answer.

Which of these brands do you follow on social media?

- Nike
- Adidas
- Reebok
- Under Armour
- Puma
- Other: Your answer

What is the source of news about new products and innovations you use the most?

- Social media
- Magazines
- Television
- Other: You answer.

Do you consider opinions listed on social media as valuable while purchasing the product?

- Yes
- No

Please, choose athletes you follow on social media:

- Cristiano Ronaldo
- Leo Messi
- Neymar
- Floyd Mayweather
- LeBron James
- Conor McGregor
- Serena Williams
- Rich Froning
- Jaromír Jágr
- Mike Tyson
- Roger Federer
- Novak Djokovic
- Tomáš Berdych
- Usain Bolt
- Petr Čech
- Petra Kvitová
- Martina Sáblíková
- Ronda Rousey
- Matt Fraser
- Lauren Fisher
- Tiger Woods
- Rafael Nadal
- Lindsey Vonn
- Andy Murray

- Zuzana Hejnová
- Maria Sharapova
- Caroline Wozniacki
- Camille Leblanc-Bazinet
- Gabriela Soukalová
- Other: Your answer.

Do you consider any athlete as your idol?

- Yes
- No

Have you ever purchased any product based on seeing an athlete who used it?

- Yes, I purchase the products which are used by top athletes, as those are the best available.
- Yes, multiple times.
- Yes, once.
- No, but I have considered it.
- No, never.

Do you use an app to track your performance?

- Yes
- No

If yes, please list its name (or names):

Your answer.

Do you share your activity through an application on social media?

- Yes, always.
- Yes, sometimes.
- No, never.

Do you want to add anything?

Your answer.

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