

# The Impact of Social Media Marketing during Mega Sports Events –an Empirical Study in the Frame of the FIFA World Cup 2014

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## Abstract

Throughout the past decade the rapid proliferation and widespread adoption of social media for marketing purposes can be observed across all technological and digital touch points. This paper focuses on the implementation of social media marketing during mega sports events. We examine impacts by analyzing adidas' and Nike's social media campaigns in the frame of the FIFA World Cup 2014 in Brazil. What impact did the social media activities of Nike and Adidas have on their Twitter and Facebook presence? Which additional value did the social media activities contribute to their respective targets of the entire marketing campaign? In order to answer these questions an empirical study was conducted. Several hypotheses were formulated and tested.

**Keywords:** Marketing, Sports Marketing, Sports Events, Social Media Marketing

**JEL classification:** M – Business Administration and Business Economics; Marketing; Accounting

M3 – Marketing and Advertising

M31 – Marketing

## 1. Introduction

In 2014 the biggest sports event in the world, the FIFA World Cup, took place in Brazil. Billions of spectators around the world saw Germany win the trophy in Rio de Janeiro for the fourth time in history. Yet unlike in previous World Cups, conversation was not only taking place at the numerous public viewings which were held in open spaces like bars and restaurants. For the entire tournament social networks like Facebook or Twitter were playing a dominant role in all aspects. With 672 million tweets on Twitter (Rogers, 2014) and three billion conversations on Facebook (Facebook, 2014), this was the most social World Cup as well as the most social mega sports event so far (Schwartz, 2014). It did not matter whether it were users, athletes or companies, everyone was trying to catch up on the conversation to be informed or inform others about their opinion or latest news.

With social media enjoying such high attention and conversation rates, companies try to benefit from the popularity of mega sports events as well. Within a very short time period they can quickly reach a large community to spread their message using the positive attitude and energy generated by the event. The two largest companies in the sports industry, adidas and Nike, continued their ongoing rivalry on these platforms during the FIFA World Cup 2014. Both had launched globally reaching marketing campaigns in order to once again demonstrate the public who the real leader in the sports goods industry is.

Yet, the question remains, what is the real impact of such campaigns? Do companies actually reap any financial benefit or is it merely an exercise in marketing and public relations? This paper focuses on the

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impact of social media marketing during mega sports events and how companies can benefit by implementing it effectively. Adidas and Nike have been chosen as two practical cases which will be examined and compared in detail.

## 2. Theoretical Foundation

### ➤ Definition of Social Media

Social media activities across the World Wide Web have been increasing tremendously within the past decade. A comprehensive definition originates from Safko & Brake (2009). They are stating that “social media encompasses all of the interactions between people online – all the ways they participate in and share information, knowledge, and the opinions while using web-based applications to communicate”.

For the purpose of this paper only Facebook and Twitter will be taken into account as they are most relevant and widely used by companies especially those in the sports industry (Witkemper et al., 2012).

*Facebook* was founded in 2004 by Marc Zuckerberg, who was a psychology student at Harvard University when he set up the company. He initially intended to create a platform for Harvard students to look up other profiles. The idea caught on and by 2005 it had expanded to all US Ivy-league universities, with thousands of students signing up and creating their own profiles. Today it is the largest social network with 1.3 billion users across the world, and was the first one of its kind to be floated on the stock market (Statista, 2015). Users create profiles according to their interests and preferences and connect with people they usually have some kind of offline relationship with such as colleagues and school friends. They can then communicate with each other by sharing links, pictures, videos or status updates. Furthermore, it is used to have discussions in groups or to organize events (Safko & Brake, 2009).

*Twitter* was founded in 2006 by Jack Dorsey and three co-founders for the purpose of sharing short information with other users about their daily life such as what they are doing at the respective moment. Therefore Twitter can be defined as a social publishing service medium being categorized into micro blogging platforms. Users are able to create micro blogs being limited to 140 characters to share different information with the community. Today it is one of the largest and most relevant networks for companies with more than 284 million monthly active users and 500 million tweets per day (Twitter, 2015). Furthermore, it is not only used by private users but has also gained high importance for journalism. Sometimes breaking news are published earlier on Twitter than by any newspaper or similar. In 2007 Twitter introduced the hash tag which is now used by most other platforms as well. A hash tag is a term, prefixed by the # symbol that helps people categorize messages in Twitter (O’Reilly & Milstein, 2009). This is particularly helpful for companies as they can more easily sort relevant data for their analysis. With the aid of hash tags they can sort the numerous tweets posted everyday by relevancy and find out what users have been talking about.

### ➤ Social Media as a Marketing Tool

Weinberg (2010) defines social media marketing as “a process that enables people or companies to advertise their websites, products, or services via social media platforms in order to reach a broader community than traditional marketing can”.

The initial goal of social media marketing is to communicate with the target audience, create relationships and listen to their needs through specifically created content. With this content a company tries to influence and educate its audience in a certain way and establish oneself as thought leader for a specific area of interest. Furthermore it tries to enforce user engagement throughout the published content in order to collect respective data that can be analyzed. However, influence does not always mean inspiring consumers to share the published content or products with others. It can also mean to reduce negatively spread content within different communities (Hettler, 2010).

Yet, the question whether social media is supposed to generate revenue or not is discussed controversially among experts. Besides the difficulty to turn social media into a sales channel, social media

marketing enjoys a benefit to other marketing tools by the low costs it provokes. Due to the fact that potential consumers can be targeted much more specifically, the divergence loss is somewhat lower in comparison to traditional channels. Moreover, search engines increasingly take social media into account concerning their rankings. Consequently, an active social media presence might not only benefit the company in terms of customer relationship and feedback but also improves their rank on Google. Particularly for companies operating in the e-commerce business or being dependent on a successful web presence this can serve as an indirect revenue generator.

➤ **The Role of the Social Consumer**

In order to understand the concept of social media it is not only important to look at the business perspective but also examine the main actors and content contributors, the users. They are the ones keeping all platforms alive by generating content and networking with others.

On social networking platforms users primarily connect with people they have some kind of relation with. This leads to generally increased trust users have on the platform and of the shared content by others (Hajli, 2014). As they trust the shared content they are more likely to share positive or negative experience in order to help their peers in making certain decisions. At the same time the feedback of the others is taken into consideration when creating an opinion about a certain product or topic. By considering social media for opinion building the user tries to escape from the information overload he faces everywhere else. Through the trust factor the shared information makes sense and is presented to him on an emotional level. This emotion then converts into logic and makes the user think he made a smart and reasoned decision. As a consequence he will share his experience which in turn helps other users to build an opinion.

Yet, no source of information directly drives the decision process, neither does social media. Today's consumers do not adhere on a single channel anymore when shopping and therefore they need to be picked up at various touch points. However, social media will play an important role in the future as social networks and blogs are the most visited online destinations in every country, accounting for a high majority of time spent online and reaching at least 60% of active internet users (Vernuccio, 2014).

➤ **Social Media Marketing During Mega Sports Events**

Sport touches people and gives them a feeling of affiliation. Football fans for instance show much more passion towards their favorite soccer club than "normal consumers" show towards their favorite brands (Nufer, 2014). Therefore the products, no matter if directly or indirectly related to sports, are more emotional than in any other product category.

Products directly related to sports are mostly merchandising products or events that are promoted by sports clubs or associations (marketing of sports). Products indirectly related to sports use sport's attention to promote the respective products (marketing through sport). Marketing through sports has become particularly relevant for companies during mega sports events. Through different marketing tools they can easily benefit from the global reach and increased attention of consumers and transfer the positive image of the event to their own brand (Bühler & Nufer, 2013).

Due to the global reach mega sports events have, they are the preferred platform for companies to engage in marketing communication. They know that promotional messages can be transmitted to billions of people via multiple communication channels (Horne & Manzenreiter, 2006). While sponsorship has been a popularly used marketing tool for years to achieve brand awareness, the implementation of social media campaigns increasingly gains importance for companies as well (MacIntosh et al., 2012).

The reasoning for this development is very simple: While spectators only watched the matches on TV and discussed them offline until a few years ago, they are now actively participating in social networks sharing opinions with other fans to stay connected and informed about the latest news (Witkemper et al., 2012). Particularly during mega sports events the largest social networks Facebook and Twitter have recorded an enormous increase in user engagement and conversation (Facebook, 2014; Rogers, 2014).

The use of social media during mega sports events is less than ten years old and therefore comparatively new. Mega sports events only take place every two to four year which usually depicts a large digital development in between. While there was no usage of social media during the FIFA World Cup 2002 in Korea first online pages were established for the FIFA World Cup 2006 in Germany. Nike even tried to set up its own online community Joga.com to engage fans in sports and give them the chance to exchange opinions with each other. Yet, the success was not as expected and networks like Facebook and Twitter were still in its beta phase with users mainly from the United States. Within the next four years until 2010 social media made a huge progress and took a central role during the FIFA World Cup in South Africa as well as during the Olympics in Vancouver in 2010. Companies tried to make contact with fans by setting up an account on the relevant networks. Yet, there was no real strategy behind to somehow relate the efforts to the entire business objectives at that time (Sniderman, 2010).

Within the last four years the use of social media has gone through another impressive development. Not only consumers have increased their engagement but also companies have learned from their experiences and have developed intelligent strategies to actually gain benefits from using social media. The latest development which has been observed throughout the last two years is the implementation of real-time communication on different platforms. Companies try to use the attention of an event and center their marketing efforts around to create a viral effect leading to increased brand awareness (Yeoman, 2014). In order to act according to unpredictable situations content is provided months ahead for every single possible scenario (Ruvolo, 2014).

Some of the most prominent examples to date are Oreo's famous tweet during the power outage of the Super Bowl 2013 (see figure 1) or Snickers tweet after Luis Suarez's bite on Giorgio Chellini during the FIFA World Cup 2014 (see figure 2).



**Figure 1:** Twitter post of Oreo during the Super Bowl 2013  
Source: Twitter (2013)



**Figure 2:** Twitter post of Snickers during the FIFA World Cup 2014  
Source: Twitter (2014)

### 3. The Impact of Social Media during the FIFA World Cup 2014

#### ➤ User Activity on Twitter and Facebook

The FIFA World Cup 2014 has generally been regarded as the most 'social' World Cup to date (Schwartz, 2014). Never in history before an event has been so actively discussed by users and used by companies as promotional tool. It therefore serves as a suitable case for a detailed research when examining the impact of social media marketing during mega sports events.

No matter on which platform, people being interested in football shared their thoughts and opinions with others during the FIFA World Cup 2014 in Brazil. Particularly Facebook and Twitter hit new records regarding their user activity during the four weeks of the tournament.

Throughout the whole World Cup Twitter recorded 672 million tweets related to the World Cup (Rogers, 2014). With 35.6 million tweets, the Brazil vs Germany Semi-Final game is officially the most-discussed single sports game ever on Twitter (Schwartz, 2014). Regarding athletes, Brazil's Neymar is the most mentioned player on Twitter during the World Cup (Rogers, 2014). The platform also noted it was the real-time moments that drove the most traffic (Lacy, 2014).

When taking a closer look at Facebook, 3 billion interactions were conducted from 350 million users during the four weeks, which makes the World Cup the most discussed sports event ever on the social networking platform (Sellin, 2014). In comparison to Twitter, Facebook recorded the final game as the most talked about sports event with 88 million people generating 280 million interactions, according to numbers from the Facebook data team (Betancourt, 2014).

### ➤ **Implementation of Social Media Campaigns by Adidas and Nike**

When examining the social media landscape throughout the time before and during the World Cup two sports companies have executed a massive social battle trying to get the most attention by users. While adidas has been in the role of being one of the official FIFA Partners since 1970, Nike has been trying regardless to obtain the public's attention with intelligently created marketing campaigns (Ruvolo, 2014). Furthermore, Nike is trying to replace adidas regarding its market leadership within the football sector. For the first time in history Nike has sponsored more teams than adidas for the past FIFA World Cup (Greeley, 2014).

#### ➤ **Adidas: "All in or Nothing"**

For the FIFA World Cup 2014 in Brazil adidas had developed a special marketing strategy to capture the fans' attention with particular focus on social media and real-time communication. The total costs are estimated at about USD\$ 68 million (Bahrey, 2014) from which a two-digit million amount went into social media (Wirtschaftswoche, 2014).

The title "all in or nothing" was supposed to bring across the winning and fighting attitude not only to the players, but also to the fans. Adidas clearly defined the three key objectives that were set for the entire campaign. These were sales, brand promotion and purchase intent, as well as the increased social media-led activation of the brand (Long, 2014). While real-time communication so far mainly focused on a timely limited event, adidas expanded this concept to the whole four-week tournament of the FIFA World Cup. Social media agencies flew around the globe for over one year capturing different pictures and video material to develop a real-time scenario calendar for every possible outcome of the 32 games (Ruvolo, 2014). Moreover, adidas did not only post content on its official Facebook and Twitter accounts they also created a new account, @brazuca. "Brazuca" is the name of the official match ball of the World Cup, which adidas has provided for every game since 1970 (Tint, 2014). It was supposed to personalize its tweets and report about every single moment and event happening during the games (Hebben, 2014).

Adidas kicked off its campaign in 2014 on May 24th, three weeks prior to the World Cup starting with a video on YouTube which asked viewers at the end to go "all in" or "nothing" (Bahrey, 2014). Those who chose "all in" signed up automatically for all updates adidas published on Twitter during the World Cup. During the games the social media team at "posto adidas", the adidas hub in Rio de Janeiro, focused on the conversation with football fans on different platforms. Reactive content was constantly prepared for all possible situations during the games (adidas, 2014a).

However, adidas did not only push the brand through its own accounts but also through its players, such as Lionel Messi or Mesut Özil, that have an exclusive contract with adidas. With their large fan communities on Facebook and Twitter the brand could perfectly use them as brand ambassadors to expand the reach of its brand message.

➤ **Nike: “Risk Everything”**

In comparison to its biggest competitor adidas, Nike usually doesn't participate as much in sponsorships, but rather implements intelligently developed ambush marketing campaigns to obtain the consumer's attention. Ambush marketing is the practice by companies of using their own marketing, particularly marketing communications activities, to give an impression of an association with the event to the event audience, although the companies in question have no legal or only underprivileged or non-exclusive marketing rights for this event sponsored by third parties. Thus, ambushers want to promote and sell products via an association with the event as official sponsors are allowed to do (Nufer, 2013).

For the FIFA World Cup 2014 they tried to gain a competitive advantage by kicking off their campaign in 2014 on April 1st, almost two months prior to adidas (Bahrey, 2014). With the leading slogan “risk everything” they started off as well with a video on YouTube featuring top players, such as Cristiano Ronaldo, Wayne Rooney, or Neymar Jr. The video demonstrates how the athletes are struggling to demonstrate their performance at the right moment. In addition to that Nike implemented supportive offline activities being related to football and the “risk everything”-campaign. By organizing indoor football tournaments all across the globe Nike did not only engage its fans online but also in the real world (Bahrey, 2014). Speaking about innovative marketing tools, Nike used a special real-time delivery tool from Google which enabled them to display online advertisements of key scenes within ten seconds. The ads were displayed on Google's Display network in 15 different countries with a large football community. Fans could click on them and create posters with the “Nike phenomenal shot”. These pictures could then be shared with friends on various social networking platforms (Lacy, 2014).

There is one thing that Nike did significantly different to all of their competitors: Instead of trying to advertise their merchandising products to push sales, they focused on the promotion of the FIFA World Cup as an event. Tint, an American social media agency, speaks about “the showcase of a sport rather than a product” (Tint, 2014). Yet, Nike did not leave out the integration of traditional media such as TV. As Zlatan Ibrahimović was not able to join the event as participant with Sweden, Nike used him as animated version to answer several questions and hot topics around the World Cup. The clips were published on ESPN's “SportsCenter” in between the games. Users could post questions with #Ask Zlatan which were eventually answered in the next video clip (Moossmann, 2014; Hermann, 2014).

#### **4. Empirical Study**

##### **Research Questions**

For the empirical study two research questions have been developed which will guide through the analysis and will take the empirical data and information retrieved from secondary research into account.

##### **Research Question 1:**

What impact did the social media activities of Nike and adidas in the context of the FIFA World Cup 2014 have on their Twitter and Facebook presence?

This question focuses primarily on the social media campaigns itself. Through the results of the empirical research as well as metrics from secondary research the respective impact on the social media presence for both companies will be derived.

## Research Question 2:

Which additional value did the social media activities of Nike and adidas on Facebook and Twitter in the context of the FIFA World Cup 2014 contribute to their respective targets of the entire marketing campaign?

The second research question takes the results of the first question as a basis to evaluate the impact on the overall business objectives.

Furthermore, three *key indicators* have been developed to determine whether adidas and Nike have used social media effectively and successfully. Aligned with the campaign objectives of the two companies the indicators have been defined as:

- **Campaign Recognition,**
- **Brand Value, And**
- **Sales Impact.**

## Data Collection

The empirical research was conducted by the implementation of an online survey. From the 800 recipients the survey was sent to, 245 started the survey, while 164 answered all questions. From the 164 valid data sets all satisfied the condition to either use Facebook or Twitter which have been defined as the focused networks. This leads to a rate of return of 20.5%.

Overall, the pro bands originate from 28 different countries from which 16 belonged to the participating countries of the FIFA World Cup 2014. Due to the fact that the authors originate from Germany, about 60% of the sample size owns a German citizenship. Speaking about gender distribution slightly more male participants finished the survey (94:70). The age of the pro bands was between 17 and 53.

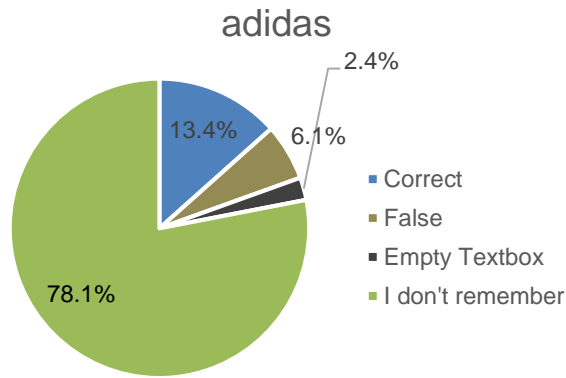
The questionnaire consisted of twenty questions, yet four questions were only displayed if certain answers were chosen. First of all participants were asked to indicate on which of the six most common social networks (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Tumblr, YouTube, Google+) they have an account. The intention was to find out something about the general social media activity and the varied behavior during the FIFA World Cup 2014. Furthermore, the participants were asked to indicate sport-related pages they follow, the number of times they post something and how often they use a hash tag. Then the recognition of adidas and Nike's social media campaigns was tested. The participants were asked to specify the respective titles without the option to choose from a given selection. Afterwards they were shown a list of different hash tags being asked to choose which one belongs to adidas and which one to Nike. The last part focused on sales conversion as well as brand recognition of the two brands and how this changed because of the FIFA World Cup 2014. Participants were asked to make indications about their favorite brand, spending on adidas and Nike products as well as attributes they link with the two brands.

## 5. Data Analysis

### Hypothesis 1

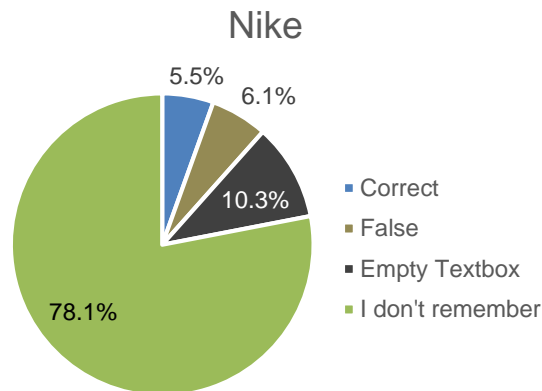
The majority of probands are not able to specify the titles of the social media campaigns of adidas and Nike when being asked directly.

This hypothesis focuses on the recognition value as part of the key indicator campaign recognition. Probands were asked to specifically name the social media campaign titles of adidas and Nike. In case they did not know either one of them they also had the possibility to choose "I don't remember".



**Figure 3: Campaign Recognition Adidas**

Figures 3 and 4 show the distribution of answers from the 164 completed questionnaires. The answer was identified as correct if either “all in” for adidas was included or “risk everything” for Nike was included. In case the proband knew one answer, but did not fill out the second textbox it was assumed that he does not remember this one. Therefore “I don’t remember” represents all probands that have chosen the particular option as well as the ones leaving the respectively other field empty.



**Figure 4: Campaign Recognition Nike**

As for both, adidas and Nike, the majority of probands could not specify the titles of the social media campaigns, the hypothesis can be confirmed.

Speaking about the direct comparison between the two brands, adidas so far performs slightly better concerning the recognition value. Twice the amount of probands, compared to Nike, were able to specify the correct title.

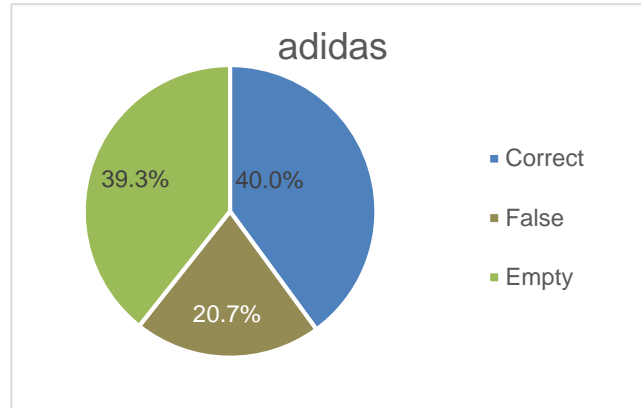
### Hypothesis 2

The majority of probands are able to identify the social media campaigns of adidas and Nike when seeing the corresponding hashtag.

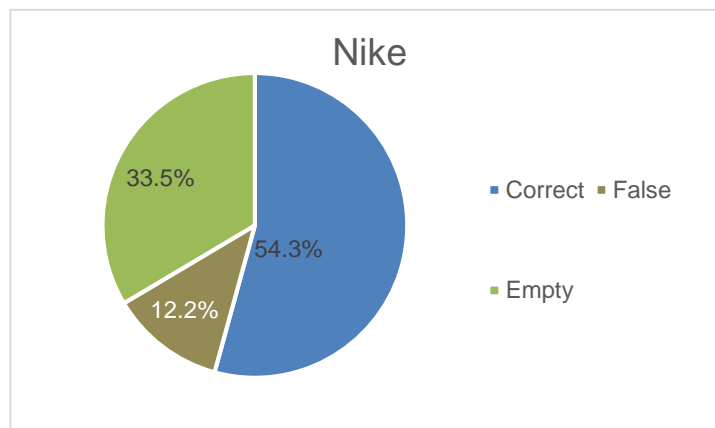
After having asked for the specific titles of the social media campaigns, probands were shown a list of different hashtags in the next step including the correct ones. The list was chosen upon the most frequently used hashtags during the FIFA World Cup 2014.



The task was to identify the respective hashtags of adidas and Nike. Figures 5 and 6 contain the results. “False” indicates that the proband has identified that the hashtag belongs to one of the two companies, but chose the wrong one. “Empty” indicates that the proband did not identify the hashtag at all. It needs to be mentioned that adidas had two correct hashtags that could be chosen, #allin and #brazuca. Therefore the mean of both results has been taken for the evaluation in order to be comparable with Nike.



**Figure 5: Campaign Identification Adidas**



**Figure 6: Campaign Identification Nike**

While the majority of probands identified Nike’s hashtag correctly, this does not apply for adidas. Therefore the hypothesis can only partially be confirmed.

When directly comparing the two brands with each other Nike performs better regarding the second part of the recognition value. More participants identified the risk everything-hashtag correctly than the allin-hashtag.

### **Hypothesis 3**

The social media campaigns of adidas and Nike increased the number of followers of the respective brands, the sponsored teams, and their players, on Facebook and Twitter as well as the number of posts.

This hypothesis focuses on the participation on Facebook and Twitter during the FIFA World Cup 2014 as part of the key indicator campaign recognition. In order to guarantee the inclusion of all key factors, data from secondary research were used additionally. Starting with the results of the survey, the probands were asked to specify all sport-related pages they follow on the two networks and select which have been caused by the FIFA World Cup 2014.

When analyzing the relevant data it is important to mention that only pages related to sponsored teams, athletes and the brands themselves were taken into account. Overall 69.5% (289 pages) of the sport-related pages the participants follow on Facebook can be classified into football which averages to 1.8 pages per person. While pages related to football and adidas denote a new follower rate of 29.8% on Facebook, Nike only denotes a rate of 8.2% caused by the FIFA World Cup 2014.

Regarding Twitter, which is used by only 52 of the 164 probands the rates are respectively lower, yet the proportions are the same. In total 69.6% (71 pages) of the followed sports pages are related to football from which 37 can be allocated to adidas and 13 to Nike. For adidas this translates into 8.1% and for Nike into 7.7% followed pages which have been caused by the FIFA World Cup 2014.

Although both brands record increased numbers of followers on the fan pages of sponsored athletes and teams, the rate of new followers on adidas pages is significantly higher compared to Nike. This tendency can be proven by taking secondary research into account. While Nike denoted only 1.5 million new followers on social networks (Betancourt, 2014), adidas has broken the record with overall 5.8 million new followers, counting 2.98 new followers solely for the @brazuca account on Twitter (adidas, 2014a).

Regarding the increased number of posts, the empirical data could only give an indication about the overall changed social behavior on Facebook and Twitter during the FIFA World Cup. The total number of posts during the World Cup has increased by 61% for Twitter and 65% for Facebook. In order to find out about the specific change in user engagement regarding adidas and Nike, secondary research was taken into account. While the allin-hashtag was used 917,000 times on Twitter (Betancourt, 2014), Nike's equivalent risk everything-hashtag is far behind with 650,000 mentions (Moossmann, 2014). Overall adidas is the most talked about brand throughout the World Cup with 1.59 million mentions (Betancourt, 2014).

Yet, one needs to keep in mind that this analysis does not take into account the YouTube activity both brands have been active on. Here Nike is by far dominating the battle with 397 million views of "The Last Game", also caused by the fact that they have started their campaign earlier. Adidas could only record 38 million views for their uploaded videos on YouTube (Betancourt, 2014).

Summing it up, participants have started to follow pages of sponsored teams and athletes from adidas as well as from Nike in the course of the FIFA World Cup 2014. Furthermore it could be found out that the number of posts related to both brands has clearly increased. Therefore the hypothesis can be accepted. Within the direct comparison of the two brands adidas records a greater increase on relevant followers as well as a higher engagement on the two observed platforms than Nike.

#### **Hypothesis 4**

Participants of adidas' and Nike's social media campaigns showed more tendency to buy the respective brand's products during and after the FIFA World Cup 2014.

As part of the key indicator sales impact this hypothesis tries to identify whether the social media campaigns had an effect on the buying behavior of the probands. Therefore they were asked how much money they spent on adidas and Nike products being separated into shoes, clothes and accessories. In order to measure only the effects of the social media campaigns the time frame was specifically chosen from April to October 2014. April was chosen as start date, because Nike started its social media campaign during this month. The reason why November and December have not been taken into account, is to avoid misleading results through the Christmas trade during these months.

Table 1 demonstrates the respective amounts the probands have spent on adidas and Nike products in total. Since the survey only gave the possibility to choose a range, the mean value was taken for each case in order to calculate the respective result correctly. Overall the probands spent 23,425€ on Nike or adidas products averaging to 142.84€ per person. While adidas denotes higher revenues in the category clothes, Nike performs better in the category shoes. In total the probands spent more money on adidas products.

**Table 1: Money Spent on Adidas and Nike Products**

	Accessories	Clothes	Shoes	Total
<b>adidas</b>	1,950€	6,675€	4,750€	<b>13,375€</b>
<b>Nike</b>	975€	3,150€	5,925€	<b>10,050€</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,925€</b>	<b>9,825€</b>	<b>10,675€</b>	<b>23,425€</b>

In order to evaluate this hypothesis, a chi-square independence test was conducted by investigating whether there is a dependence between participants of the social media campaigns and the tendency to buy adidas or Nike products. Whenever the proband indicated some spendings, he or she was identified to have an increased tendency to buy. Speaking about social media participants, they were identified as one from either adidas or Nike if one of their followed pages relates to the brands, a sponsored athlete or a team of the World Cup. With one degree of freedom and a significance level of 95%, for both adidas and Nike there is no dependence between the two variables. Consequently this hypothesis is rejected as the participants of the social media campaigns do not show an increased tendency to buy the respective brand's product.

When comparing adidas and Nike with each other, participants of adidas' social media campaign, although very low, show greater tendency to buy adidas products within the time frame than Nike and also spend more in total. Therefore adidas performs better regarding sales conversion.

### **Hypothesis 5**

Probands were not influenced by adidas and Nike's social media campaigns in terms of brand preference, because they prefer the brand that sponsors the team they support.

This hypothesis focuses on brand preference as part of the key indicator brand value and can be split into two parts. Firstly, it states that the social media campaigns did not influence the proband's brand preference. Since 94% of the sample size stated that they did not change their brand preference throughout the World Cup, the first condition is already satisfied. In order to evaluate whether probands prefer the brand that sponsors their team, a sample size of 137 could be used. Probands that either changed their brand preference or did not know the jersey sponsor of the team they support were not taken into account.

In order to evaluate the correlation between the two variables the correlation coefficient was calculated resulting in  $R=0.11$ . When calculating the absolute numbers 45% of participants prefer the brand that sponsors their team.

It seems that the jersey sponsor of the supported team might be a small indicator of the brand preference, yet not a key driver. Therefore the hypothesis can only partially be confirmed. While the assumption that the probands were not influenced by the social media campaigns in terms of brand preference holds true, they are not in favor of the brand that sponsors their team.

As the results of this hypothesis do not allow to make a comparison of adidas and Nike concerning brand preference, the results from the survey about proband's favorite brands are used as decisive factor. While 66 probands named Nike as their favorite brand, adidas is slightly behind with a number of 58 probands. Therefore Nike outperforms adidas in this category.

### **Hypothesis 6**

The social media campaigns of adidas and Nike performed during the FIFA World Cup 2014 have led to an increased brand awareness.

This last hypothesis examines the brand awareness towards adidas and Nike and how the social media campaigns as part of the overall marketing campaign have affected consumer's perception of each brand. In order to test this, probands were shown different attributes which included the officially claimed brand values of adidas and Nike. While authentic, committed, honest, innovative, inspirational, and passionate stand for the officially claimed adidas brand values (adidas, 2014b), Nike's values stand for innovation, inspiration, sustainability, and design– translated into “fashionable” in the survey(Nike, 2014).

At least three attributes per brand had to be allocated to either adidas or Nike. Afterwards the participants were asked whether this perception has changed throughout the FIFA World Cup 2014 and how the attributes would have been distributed before. Only 16 of the 164 probands had a different perception of the brands before the FIFA World Cup which is not significant enough for an evaluation. Therefore the hypothesis is rejected.

However, it is still worth taking a look at the selected attributes as some consumers might not actively notice their changed brand perception. Table 2 demonstrates the results of the relevant attributes as well as the number of times they were mentioned by the probands. The proportion has been calculated as the percentage of the total sample size which has chosen the specific attribute. The average number of selected attributes added up to 3.2 mentions per brand.

**Table 2: Associated attributes with adidas and Nike**

	<b>adidas</b> # mentions	<b>Proportion</b>	<b>Nike</b> # mentions	<b>Proportion</b>	<b>Winner/Loser</b>
<b>authentic</b>	117	71.3%	25	15.2%	adidas
<b>committed</b>	65	39.6%	26	15.9%	adidas
<b>innovative</b>	42	25.6%	81	49.4%	Nike
<b>inspirational</b>	30	18.3%	48	29.3%	Nike
<b>fashionable</b>	52	31.7%	83	50.6%	Nike
<b>sustainable</b>	51	31.1%	12	7.3%	adidas
<b>honest</b>	50	30.5%	3	1.8%	adidas
<b>passionate</b>	31	18.9%	102	62.2%	Nike

When comparing the results with the aimed values, Nike performs better in three of the four claims, namely innovation, inspiration, and design (“fashionable”). The only attribute that probands by far do not link with Nike is sustainability. The values of adidas, in comparison, are only confirmed by probands in three of six cases. Particularly for the two attributes that both companies claim (innovational, inspirational) probands associate them rather with Nike than with adidas. Consequently, although no major changes can be observed throughout the World Cup, Nike seems to enjoy the better brand awareness than adidas.

## **6. Discussion**

### **➤ Evaluation of the Research Questions**

The first research question solely focused on the social media campaigns themselves and asks to determine the impact achieved through the different activities which have been described before. Looking at the results of the hypotheses that belong to campaign recognition both companies have increased their social media presence. This happened through their own brand but also through the public’s attention towards the sponsored teams and players. Athletes enjoy high influence on consumers as they somehow act as ideals whom their fans strive to be. Both companies have utilized this well as can be seen at the results of hypothesis 3. The athletes and their teams were the type of pages consumers mostly started to follow throughout the World Cup. However, when asking consumers about the campaigns in particular, the majority is only able to remember them when seeing the titles in a list with other ones. And even then only 40.0% for adidas and 54.3% for Nike are able to assign them correctly.

It seems that even though the superior messages have been spread across numerous channels and aligned with matching stories (e.g. “The Last Game”) they still did not stick to people’s heads. What seems however controversial is that more people appear to remember the adidas title by themselves compared to Nike but not when being presented in the list. This might be due to the fact that probands had the chance to

guess in this part of the survey. Taking this fact into account one can conclude that Nike's title had a higher brand match than "allin" from adidas. Hence, people identified it even though they eventually did not know about the campaign.

Coming back to follower rates, adidas performed slightly better than Nike regarding the increase of followers. Few indicators could have led to a better performance through adidas. First of all, they had the edge over Nike to sponsor the two participants of the World Cup final and consequently the winner of the tournament. Furthermore, the Golden Ball, Golden Boot, and Golden Glove were given to players sponsored by adidas. The Fair Play Award went to Colombia, who is also sponsored by adidas. In comparison to that, Portugal and England, two of the top favored nations sponsored by Nike, already dropped out of the tournament after the group phase. Since they have two of the most valued players in the world, Cristiano Ronaldo and Wayne Rooney, this was a big setback for Nike. Especially since the entire communication of the risk everything-campaign was built around them, particularly Cristiano Ronaldo.

Another success driver eventually was the content strategy that adidas chose in alignment with its entire presence throughout the World Cup. In an intelligent way they have not only created relevant real-time content that people are interested in. But they have also brought this on a personalized level by creating for instance the @brazuca account on Twitter. It even substituted informational media in some way by always sharing the latest news with its community. Although Nike implemented something similar with its hashtag #AskZlatan, they did not set up an own account for that. Furthermore, they were somehow limited with real-time communication as they were no official sponsor and therefore could not display content linked to FIFA or the World Cup.

After having examined the particular impact on the social media presence of both companies the previously mentioned results shall now be transferred to a broader context. The second research question aims to determine the additional value which has been created upon the mentioned social media impacts. The findings will then be compared to the two specifically selected business objectives from all targets both brands have defined for the entire campaign (sales conversion, brand value).

Speaking about sales conversion, it is generally hard to measure which channels generated which sales and how they contributed to the overall results. There are different approaches on how to make social media somehow measurable. Adidas and Nike both have not shared particular links or coupons that lead to a page where consumers can buy something. Therefore the correlated ROI is used in order to approximate a tendency towards sales increase through social media.

Both brands have been able to increase their revenues through the World Cup. Numbers of adidas from the third quarter 2014 record an increase of 6.13% in revenues to 4.12 billion Euro (adidas, 2014c). As Nike uses a different fiscal year than Adidas, the numbers are not exactly comparable but still give an indication. For the second quarter of the fiscal year 2015 (ended in November 2014) they record higher revenues of 7.4 billion dollars posing an increase of 15% (Nike, 2014).

Hypothesis 5 aimed to identify whether some of the generated revenues were caused by social media. In order to find this out the tendency to buy products when taking part in the social media campaigns was examined. As seen in the data analysis no significant correlation could be measured for adidas and Nike. Therefore it seems that this channel has not been a major revenue driver although the companies strived for it. Within the direct comparison the correlation of adidas though was closer to reach a significant result than Nike's. However, when comparing the revenue, increases above Nike seems by far to outperform its rival adidas.

A possible reason for this result is the way the campaigns were set up. When looking at the subjects, both companies had a stronger focus on content than on anything related sales conversion. One can also separate this into the differentiation between a digital and a social strategy. As per definition from Piskorski (2014) they both have implemented a digital strategy by sharing tons of content across numerous channels and thereby increasing followers, posts, and the conversation throughout the World Cup. Although Nike

denotes the better overall results the initial comparison is made upon their achievements on social media where adidas has performed better than Nike.

Lastly, consumers have recognized the brand as well as started to talk about it and hence linked it to the World Cup as found out through the first research question. Whether this had an impact on people's brand preference can be found out by analyzing the results of the last key indicator brand value. Two hypotheses have helped to examine this indicator. Yet, as seen in the data analysis probands neither changed their brand preference nor did the perception of the brand change throughout the World Cup. Moreover, the assumption that probands prefer the brand that sponsors their team could not hold true as well due to the small correlation coefficient determined.

However, as the Nike values are more often linked with the brand than the adidas values with its brand Nike is identified as the better performer within this category. Furthermore, they are also the more favored brand among the probands which makes them the leader of the entire key indicator brand value.

#### ➤ **Derived Recommendations**

As mentioned before the brands had implemented a digital strategy rather than a social strategy. The approach they used rather focused on a long-term strategy that goes far beyond the tournament of the FIFA World Cup 2014. With the increased fan community that has been built through utilizing the tournament's attention the companies now have an excellent base from which they can reach their relatively young target group more effectively through social media. A future step could be to start developing a real, more effective social strategy in order to convert this continuing attention into revenue.

Regarding brand preference and awareness the question is whether this campaign really served to change people's mind about brand preference which leads back to the question what really drives brand preference in sports. Adidas and Nike both are well-known global brands that most people have been in touch with for their entire life. The aim of the World Cup campaigns was rather to use social media as brand building tool and once again communicate their respectively strong position in the sports sector to the public. In some perspectives it even seemed as if the goal was to demonstrate who the real leader is in the sports goods industry – adidas or Nike.

This direction towards the company's strategies can be supported by the results of a study conducted by Catalyst (2014) concerning fan engagement. Eight of ten fans are willing to take action when following a brand in terms of conversation, sharing, and buying intention. Therefore the data can also be used to develop customized loyalty programs to tie the consumers closer to the brand.

## **7. Limitations and Further Research**

The empirical analysis comprised the two most popular and relevant social networks for companies, Facebook and Twitter. However, adidas and Nike did not only spread their content through these networks, but used numerous other ones as well. Especially the integration of YouTube would have had a major influence on the results, as both companies set a strong focus on them. However, taking into account all social platforms would not have been possible to be comprised within this paper. Therefore this poses a significant limitation towards the conducted data.

In the course of the analysis additional topics have been identified in order to conduct further research:

First of all it would be interesting to find out how the results would have differed if all social networks used by adidas and Nike during the FIFA World Cup had been taken into account. Although Facebook and Twitter are the most used networks it is clear that not all consumers could be covered through them. Maybe the purchase intention is higher on other networks compared to Facebook and Twitter.

Moreover, this analysis has identified that the sponsor of one's supported team is not a driver for brand preference. It would though be interesting for further research what the drivers for brand preference actually are within the sports industry.

Lastly, it could be examined whether being in the role of the official sponsor (adidas) or being in the role of the ambusher (Nike) has an influence on the success of social media marketing. The only marginally mentioned viral effects of social media marketing could then also be further investigated.

## **8. Conclusion and Future Outlook**

After a detailed analysis on social media marketing during mega sports events one has to admit that the practice of this marketing tool is still in its early stages and great development is laying ahead. Some industries do not see the additional value of social media for their operations and already decreased their spending. Yet, the companies finding something that affects people personally to be related to their products will be the ones who achieve success through social media. Due to the emotionally charged nature of sports as a product and people's interest and affection regarding sports, social media will gain particular importance for this industry.

The question whether social media is supposed to be a source of revenue or not will probably be an ongoing discussion which companies will solve in different ways in the future. When taking a look at the latest Digital Shopper Relevancy Research Report 2014, published by Capgemini (2014), the intention is not only to generate revenue through ,but also with social media. According to them social media takes different roles throughout the purchasing process. While it does not have such a high influence on transaction yet, social media certainly play a role regarding awareness and choice. With Twitter's new "buy button" the basis for future transactions via social media is already set. But companies still have to find a way how to convince their consumers to make respective purchases.

An interesting fact is also that results differ among developed and developing countries, such as China, Mexico or Brazil. For them social media even in the transaction process plays a much more important role (Capgemini, 2014).

Another important development to be observed in the future is the use of social media data and its future integration in the innovation processes. Companies are gathering tons of data from consumers through comments and opinion sharing. This valuable feedback from the target audience can carry on the development of new product ideas to consumer's needs. Furthermore, it can help to improve the after-sales service which consumers increasingly demand from the internet (Capgemini, 2014).

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