



Redtorch

sport on social

League Table 2024

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Chris Argyle-Robinson
Redtorch Research & Strategy Director, Co-founder

Dear friends and colleagues

2024 is a momentous year, with a milestone of 5 billion social media users reached worldwide.

This presents a fantastic opportunity for growth, but in an era where everything competes with everything, the battle to remain relevant has never been more important ... or more challenging.

With this in mind, we're excited to unveil the 8th edition of our SportOnSocial League Table, the industry-leading ranking of Olympic IFs based on their social media performance in 2023.

This year's report is bigger and better than ever, and here's what's new:

1. 4 IFs have joined the rankings due to confirmation of their Olympic inclusion
2. a comprehensive TikTok ranking is included
3. an index score in the overall SportOnSocial League Table 2024 highlights the actual differences in rankings
4. our new Redtorch AI Engine enabled us to analyse 42 International Federations (IFs), 347 social media handles and 322.6k pieces of content in an even more comprehensive and detailed way

As an agency, our goal is to make sport more relevant and – in a crucially important Olympic year – this report is designed to provide insights for IFs to help them win the battle for attention while maximising the social media opportunity presented by Paris 2024.

And lastly – a big thank you to all our fantastic report contributors.

Best wishes



methodology

The SportOnSocial League Table 2024 ranks 43 Summer and Winter Olympic International Federations (IFs) by their social media performance in 2023.

To determine the rankings, analysts from the Redtorch Research & Performance Lab utilised a combination of 3rd-party tools, desk research and propriety technology to analyse 324.6k social media posts across 347 primary, discipline-specific and World Championship pages actively managed by IFs.

The following platforms and subsequent metrics were analysed:



platform: Facebook

metrics: total followers, follower growth, growth rate, engagement rate*, total engagements, engagements per post, total video views (including Reels), video views per video



platform: Instagram

metrics: total followers, follower growth, growth rate, engagement rate*, total engagements, engagements per post, total video views (including Reels), video views per video



platform: X/Twitter

metrics: total followers, follower growth, growth rate, engagement rate*, total engagements, engagements per post



platform: YouTube

metrics: total subscribers, follower growth, growth rate, total engagements, engagements per post, total video views, video views per video



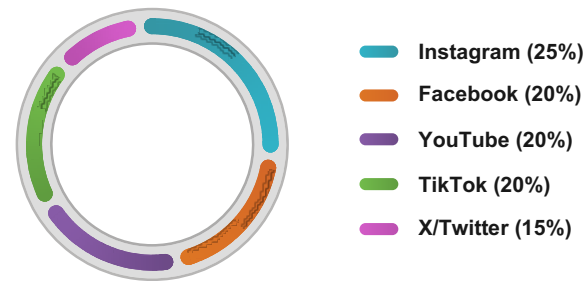
platform: TikTok

metrics: total followers, follower growth, growth rate, engagement rate**, total engagements, engagements per post, total video views, video views per video

*engagement rate = number of post engagements divided by number of fans (Facebook, Instagram, X/Twitter, YouTube)
 **TikTok engagement rate = engagements divided by video views

platform weighting

Multiple SportOnSocial surveys conducted over the past 8 years resulted in the platforms being weighted as follows:



notes

- data correct as of Tuesday 13 February 2024
- analysis of open-source data meant it was not possible to determine whether metrics were organic or paid
- Instagram Stories metrics have not been included as data not available
- an IF performance index score (out of 100) has been included in the overall rankings to highlight the gaps between positions and offer a clearer understanding of differences in rank
- this year sees the inclusion of 4 IFs that have recently received confirmation of their Olympic status – International Cricket Council (ICC), World Lacrosse, World Squash, World DanceSport Federation (WDSF)
- International Golf Federation (IGF) and International Federation of American Football (IFAF) are not included due to unavailable 2023 data
- content analysis performed on top 200 posts on Facebook/Instagram/ X/Twitter using Redtorch AI Engine
- the SportOnSocial League Table benchmarks IF social media performance only. It is not ranking, making comment, or presenting analysis into the popularity of any specific sport

Redtorch cannot guarantee the accuracy of analysis of the SportOnSocial League Table and disclaims all warranties — either express or implied — including warranties for merchantability and fitness for any particular purpose.



SportOnSocial League Table 2024

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SportOnSocial League Table 2024

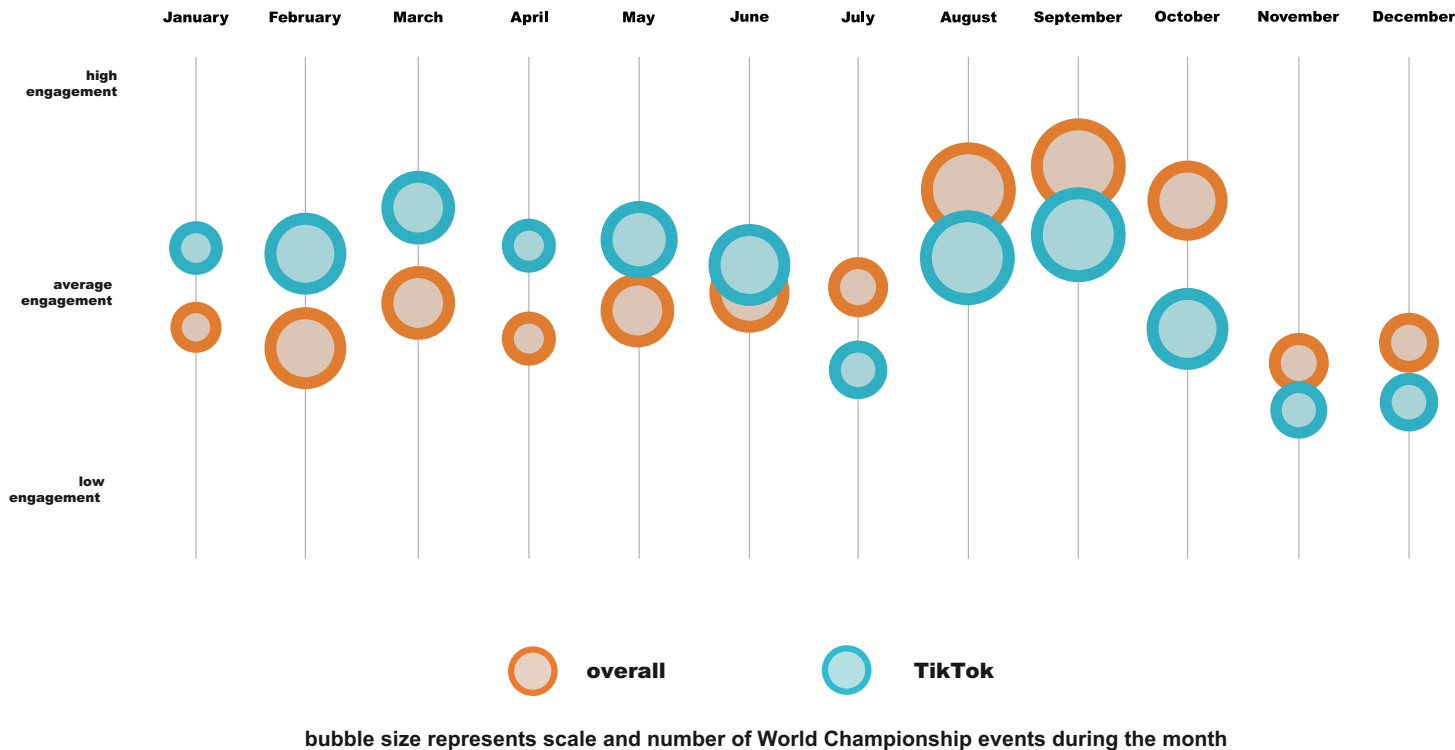
rank	international federation	change	score*
1	Volleyball World (FIVB)	0	96.6
2	World Athletics	+1	94.2
3	Fédération Internationale de Basketball (FIBA)	+1	93.3
4	World Rugby	+2	90.5
5	World Aquatics	+2	88.5
6	Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA)	-4	85.8
7	United World Wrestling (UWW)	+2	80.6
8	Union Cycliste Internationale (UCI)	0	78.4
9	World Table Tennis (WTT)	+3	73.2
10	Badminton World Federation (BWF)	-5	72.7
11	International Cricket Council (ICC)	new entry	72.6
12	Fédération Internationale de Gymnastique (FIG)	+4	70.1
13	International Skating Union (ISU)	-3	67.5
14	Fédération Internationale de Ski et du Snowboard (FIS)	0	67.0
15	World Archery	0	65.6
16	International Ice Hockey Federation (IIHF)	+2	59.1
=17	Fédération Equestre Internationale (FEI)	-4	58.6
=17	World Taekwondo (WT)	+3	58.6
19	International Biathlon Union (IBU)	+4	58.5
20	International Tennis Federation (ITF)	+1	55.7
21	International Judo Federation (IJF)	-10	55.6
22	International Federation of Sport Climbing (IFSC)	-5	54.8

rank	international federation	change	*score
23	International Handball Federation (IHF)	+7	54.3
24	World Baseball Softball Confederation (WBSC)	-5	53.4
25	International Surfing Association (ISA)	+6	49.0
26	International Hockey Federation (FIH)	-4	42.6
27	World Karate Federation (WKF)	-3	41.4
28	International Weightlifting Federation (IWF)	+1	33.8
29	World DanceSport Federation (WDSF)	new entry	33.2
30	World Rowing	-3	32.7
31	World Lacrosse	new entry	30.9
32	World Squash (WSF)	new entry	30.5
33	World Curling (WCF)	-8	30.2
34	International Bobsleigh and Skeleton Federation (IBSF)	-2	28.3
35	International Canoe Federation (ICF)	0	24.2
36	Fédération Internationale d'Esgrime (FIE)	-2	22.5
37	World Triathlon	-11	22.2
38	International Luge Federation (FIL)	-5	22.0
39	World Sailing (WS)	-2	21.1
40	World Skate	-1	20.5
41	International Shooting Sport Federation (ISSF)	-5	17.2
42	World Pentathlon (UIPM)	-4	14.3

* IF performance index score (out of 100) provided beside overall rankings to highlight the gaps between positions and offer a clearer understanding of differences in rank.

global picture of social media engagements

overall/TikTok monthly social media engagements* (indexed vs average)



events drive engagement on Instagram, Facebook, X/Twitter

August/September/October have the most international events and drive the majority of IF engagements throughout the year on Facebook, Instagram and X/Twitter.

The influx in engagements during the summer months is visible across all 3 platforms and indicates the influence of events on channel engagement.

Audiences view platforms like Facebook, Instagram and X/Twitter as primary sources for event results/highlights. It's crucial for IFs to have clear channel-specific content strategies to align with audience expectations/needs. This is particularly critical during a Summer Olympic year when dedicated sports enthusiasts are likely to seek out IF pages for timely content throughout the event.

TikTok's content flourishes outside of events

TikTok engagement tell a different story to other platforms as it is not dependent on events – quite the opposite – and generates most engagements at the beginning of the year when events are less frequent.

TikTok is increasingly becoming a powerhouse in engagement (up +36% from last year) so its ability to drive growth outside of events must be grasped by IFs.

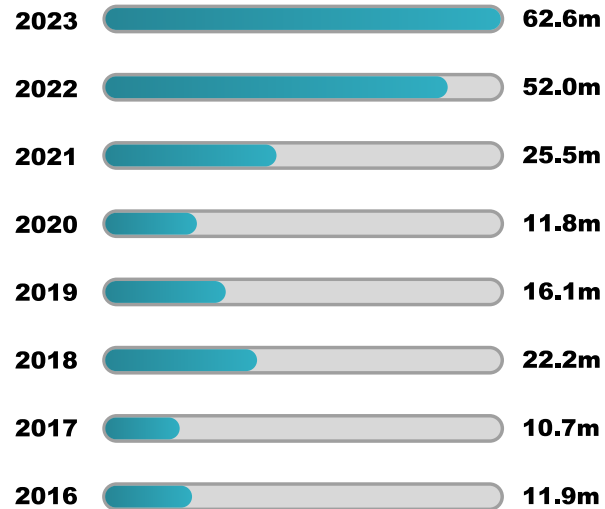
Behind-the-scenes/memes/archive content all perform well on TikTok – this kind of non-event content will be crucial for Paris 2024 with the video restrictions placed on IFs.

* ICC and FIFA engagements excluded.

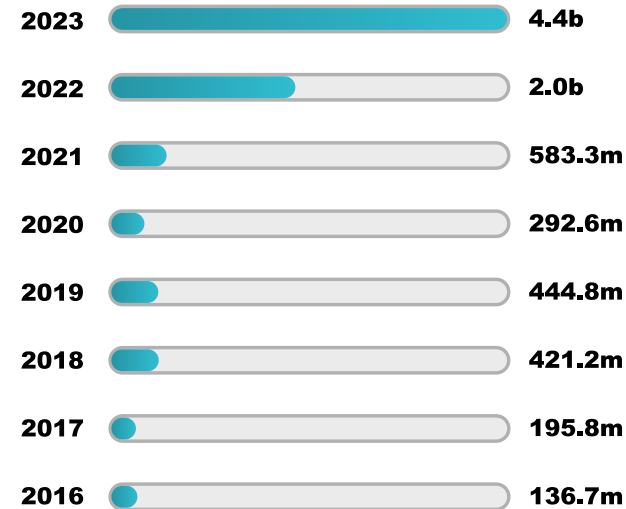
IFs double engagement to 4.4bn

+125% overall increase – the highest in SportOnSocial history.

follower growth by year



engagements by year



follower growth

In 2023, International Federations (IFs) saw their highest growth in followers on Instagram (+18.9 million) and TikTok (+17.4 million).




Notably, the average number of IF followers on TikTok jumped by +253%. While platforms like TikTok offer exciting opportunities, long-established platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and X/Twitter are still seeing consistent growth with increases ranging from +7% to +29% in 2023.

engagement

Social media engagement for IFs soared in 2023, doubling year-on-year. Instagram led the charge by contributing to 71% of all engagements. Both major platforms, Instagram and Facebook, saw significant increases in engagement (over +125% each).

The addition of the International Cricket Council (ICC) further boosted engagement by 2.1 billion. Even without factoring in new IFs, year-on-year engagement grew by 18%.

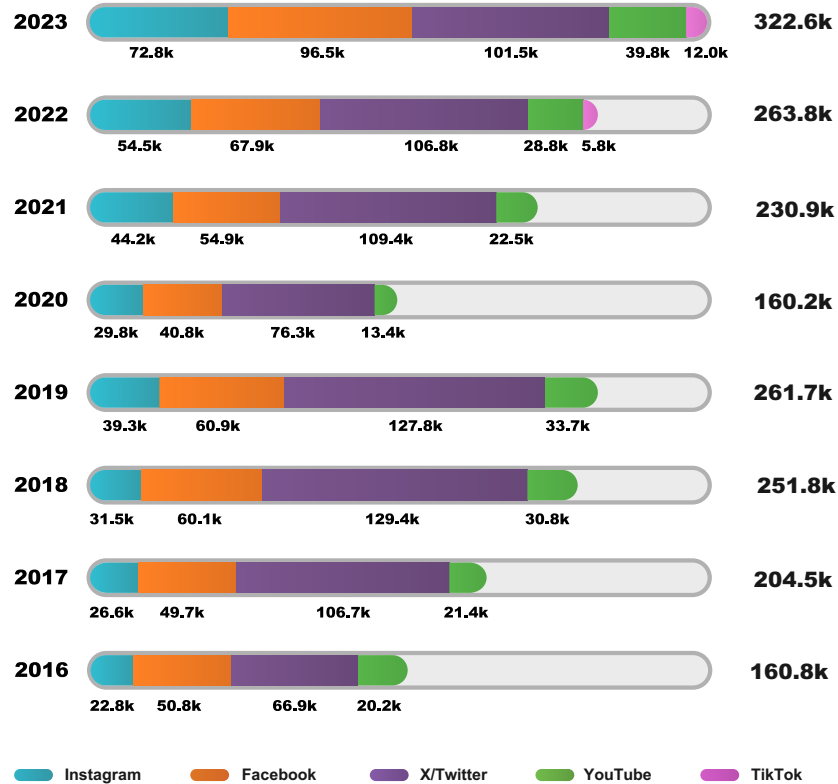
takeaways

-  Instagram **must** be a key focus area for any IF looking to get high engagement numbers. If you don't already have a platform-specific strategy for Instagram, it's time to create one!
-  Facebook isn't going away! Sure, it may not have the shiny appeal and young audience of TikTok, but it clearly has an engaged audience ready to be tapped into.
-  TikTok continues to grow and evolve. IFs need to have clear strategies for vertical videos across different platforms as it's not one-size-fits-all. Use [TikTok's free tools](#) to research trending hashtags/sounds and check out content from other creators that performs well to stay on top of the latest trends.

+22% increase in posts driven by vertical videos

IFs have significantly increased vertical video posts across all platforms.

posts by year



Vertical video content is experiencing a surge across several platforms. The overall number jumped an impressive +118% vs 2022. Facebook Reels saw the most dramatic increase in posts (+818%) followed closely by YouTube Shorts (+777%) and TikTok (+104%).



YouTube Shorts are rapidly gaining popularity although regular videos still hold the majority share on the platform. Reels dominate on Instagram (accounting for over half of all posts). Facebook Reels generated +18% more engagement than regular videos on the platform, making them a powerful tool for connecting with audiences.



Another trend is the rise of longer-form content on TikTok. The number of videos exceeding one minute in length increased by +196%, suggesting viewers are looking for deeper engagement and storytelling experiences on the platform.



The rise of vertical video content across social media is undeniable. This mobile-friendly format is convenient as well as engaging.

post formats (excluding X/Twitter)

photo
(photos, carousels)

71.5k | +10%

vertical video
(Reels, Shorts, TikTok)

74.4k | +118%

horizontal video
(Facebook/YouTube)

58.9k | -3%

other
(Facebook links/statuses)

18.4k | +25%

headlines



ranks #1 overall for 2nd year in a row

Volleyball World performed highly across all platforms and took top spot in the overall League Table. It also reclaimed #1 spot on X/Twitter and YouTube, amassing more views than any other IF on the latter.



ranks #1 on Facebook for 3rd year in a row

World Aquatics not only topped the table on Facebook but rose year-on-year on every other platform. This led to it breaking into the top 5 in overall rankings.



highest-ranked new entrant

Ranking 11th overall, ICC had the 2nd highest audience size (104.6m). It also ranks highest for engagements on Facebook, Instagram and X/Twitter.



the biggest climber

Creating a TikTok account helped IHF climb 7 places in overall rankings. Compared to accounts of a similar size, it recorded impressive engagements/video views. TikTok wasn't IHF's only success as it moved up the table across all platforms.



basketball dominates Instagram through its focus on Reels

Posting nearly 3,000 Reels (+69% increase vs 2022), FIBA accrued the highest number of video views (2 billion), with an average of 1.3 million views per video on its main page. This resulted in 1.4m new followers across all pages.



Winter IFs IBU & IIFH rise in rank post-Olympics

IBU (+4) and IIFH (+2) both rose in the rankings – an impressive feat not managed by any other Winter IF. This was all the more striking as 2023 was not a Winter Olympic year while 2022 was! Both IFs saw success on Facebook and X/Twitter; IBU smashed it on Instagram in 2023; IIFH had a great year on YouTube.





INTERVIEW

Ace Asas

Senior Content Manager, Volleyball World

Massive congratulations on retaining your SportOnSocial League Table 2024 title for the 2nd year in a row! Do you think any of the strategic decisions you made were key to this continued success?

We are truly honoured and grateful to be #1 for the second consecutive year. In terms of strategy, we continued to implement what worked for us the previous year such as focusing on what each platform is recommending us to do.

For example, to push more Reels on Facebook and Instagram, and Shorts on YouTube. We remained well connected with our community, too, and they continued to give us feedback to help us assess how we can improve our digital presence.

You also rank #1 on X and YouTube. Do you have different strategies per platform? If so, how do they differ?

We use X as a tool where we can constantly update our audience on major events, their favourite players, and all the latest news. What also worked well for us was that we started catering more to Japan, Turkey, Thailand and Brazil where users are super active on this channel.

In addition, we became their go to source of information and it's this that contributes to our success on the platform. As for YouTube, we began significantly increasing our output of Shorts which helped massively increase views and reach a wider audience.

What were the main challenges you faced across your digital channels in 2023? How did you manage them?

The main challenge for us in 2023 was that short-form videos became a required piece of content on platforms like Facebook, Instagram and even YouTube. We had to evaluate how we could effectively tell a story to our community in a video of about 6–10 seconds and how we could capture their attention to consume such content. But we still see value in long-form

content on our channels from a monetisation perspective so we tested different ways of striking a balance that catered for the platform requirements but still ensured we hit our targets and specifications.

What's the biggest learning you've taken from 2023?

Having a clear framework on what you want to achieve from each channel is key. Once that is done, it's essential to really get to know your audience in order to set clear goals. We wouldn't be able to do that if we didn't leverage our CRM and analytics. Once we begin putting those goals into action, the key steps involve keeping an eye on analytics, actively interacting with our audience, and embracing the trial of new ideas. It's all about staying connected and being innovative.

Are there any key learnings you're taking from Tokyo 2020 and other previous Olympic Games as we head into Paris 2024?

The Olympics are always filled with stories, ranging from the thrill of first-time Olympians and those having their final shot at glory, to the heartache of near misses and the triumph of underdogs. Photos wield a unique power in conveying such narratives, even when we're restricted from sharing Olympic-related videos. It's crucial we communicate to our team in Paris the importance of capturing these indelible moments. Additionally, the Olympics provides a golden opportunity to leverage the platform and tailor content to harness the organic surge in attention from new fans. It's your chance to introduce them to a new facet of the sport and showcase its magnificence.

What advice would you give other IFs on how to create a successful social media strategy?

You must understand your audience to create clear objectives. Once you start implementing such objectives, monitor analytics, engage with your audience, and don't hold back on testing new ideas.





platform & content trends

13	Facebook
16	Instagram
19	X/Twitter
21	YouTube
23	TikTok





Facebook

Top 10 IFs

- 1 World Aquatics
- 2 World Athletics
- 3 International Cricket Council (ICC)
- 4 World Archery
- 5 Volleyball World (FIVB)
- 6 Fédération Internationale de Gymnastique (FIG)
- 7 World Rugby
- 8 Fédération Internationale de Basketball (FIBA)
- 9 Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA)
- 10 Union Cycliste Internationale (UCI)

the largest IF fanbase ever

as IF engagement tactics continue to evolve

 fans

167.7m

total fans

14.4m

fan growth

+12%

average IF growth rate

 engagements

665.9m

total engagements

+128%

year-on-year increase

review of content | Facebook



event previews & fan engagement

On Facebook, 20% of pre-event content is informational.

To tap into the natural excitement that occurs before events, IFs need to consider which content will best boost engagement.

Material like previews and predictions are information based, but they aren't very interactive, so IFs need to find ways to make this content more engaging.

What should you do? Use tools such as polls, Q&A sessions and countdowns to boost anticipation for events and get conversations started.

behind-the-scenes

Content showcasing athlete preparation and training techniques received the highest engagement on Facebook (7.4k average per post).

This content educates audiences/creates appreciation for athletes' dedication and hard work. It also shows off their unique personalities as relatable humans, not just elite machines.

Sharing this type of content is a great tactic for building excitement ahead of major events and filling gaps within the content calendar during quieter periods.

Even better, try collaborating with athletes to tap into their personal fan bases.

athlete focus

Storytelling narratives around athletes resonate widely across all platforms.

Such content generated 70 million engagements on Facebook, proving how much the audience wants a deeper understanding of athletes beyond their professional feats.

Ultimately, it's the athletes who are the real superstars for any IF as they create the strongest connection with fans. Key to this is highlighting their personalities.

Invite fans along on athletes' journeys and make them feel included in their stories – to do this, use long-form videos, Reels, articles, etc.



INTERVIEW

Jacopo Briatore

Digital Content Creator, World Aquatics

A big congratulations for ranking 1st on Facebook for the 3rd year in a row! Were any decisions you made in 2023 key to your success?

We're thrilled to have led the way during this Olympic cycle heading up to Paris 2024! The largest community among World Aquatics' social media channels is found on Facebook which has almost 2 million followers.

In 2023, we saw a shift in engagement across the platform towards new content formats. We had to adapt our production to what the platform and its audiences were interested in. At the same time, it has been very important to experiment with creativity and analyse results to develop how best we can showcase our six sports on social media to attract new viewers.

Furthermore, 2023 was even more significant for us as it was the first full year after our rebranding to World Aquatics. With a new beginning and a new strategy, we couldn't be completely sure how our community would respond.

However, with a new start comes new opportunities and these have been key to our digital success and growth – not only on Facebook but on other platforms, too. This shows how quality content effortlessly breaks through barriers: our fans are now more closely connected with us as they embrace our refreshed look and feel.

Do you have a specific Facebook strategy? If yes, how does it differ from your other channels?

The short answer is 'Yes'. We believe every social media platform is unique and therefore needs its own individual strategy. This doesn't necessarily mean content has to be different across platforms but that it should be adapted for each specific social media platform.

In our case, representing six very different sports, each with a distinct audience, it has been crucial to learn which disciplines our Facebook community enjoys the most. This helps us to keep them continuously engaged while at the same time suggesting content from other sports to grow the number of our fans.

You've managed to sustain success on Facebook over many years. How have you managed to achieve this and how do you balance long-term strategy with short-term wins?

As in all sports, perseverance to improve and consistency have been key for both long-term strategy and short-term wins. We're very happy that our community is noticing the effort we're putting in and the changes we've made over the years to improve how we deliver original content to them. I believe a big part of this success is also thanks to the amazing team we have around us. First and foremost, they are passionate about our sports, making it possible to enjoy the work we do.

What tactics do you think will be most important to World Aquatics to drive growth and engagement on Facebook pre, during and post-Paris 2024?

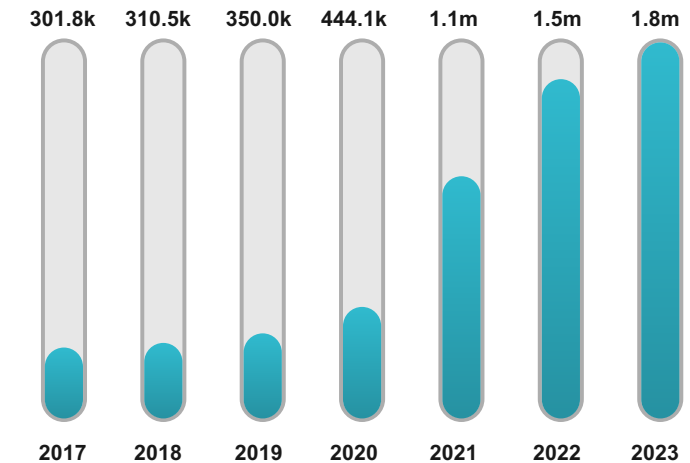
An Olympic year is always exciting! Having five sports at Paris 2024 creates opportunities to engage with new audiences who may not usually follow those sports outside of the Olympics. We believe it's important to follow athlete journeys towards the Games through our events, identifying those stories people may not know about.

Looking back on the World Championships in Fukuoka 2023 and Doha 2024, we expect to see exciting competitions across all sports at Paris 2024. We aim to capitalise on those moments to promote our sports and attract as many people as possible to the fantastic world of aquatics.

What is one bit of advice you'd give IFs looking to improve their performance on Facebook?

I would say, embrace your athletes and experiment with different types of content. Athletes are the stars of every IF: building relationships with them and working together offers the chance to provide your audience with something they won't be able to see on TV. Experimenting with content can also have great results. As we have seen, the best results sometimes come from content that is not necessarily performance- or competition-related but from something the community can relate to.

World Aquatics Facebook followers





Instagram

Top 10 IFs

- 1 **Fédération Internationale de Basketball (FIBA)**
- 2 **World Athletics**
- 3 **Volleyball World (FIVB)**
- 4 **United World Wrestling (UWW)**
- 5 **World Aquatics**
- 6 **Badminton World Federation (BWF)**
- 7 **World Rugby**
- 8 **Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA)**
- 9 **International Cricket Council (ICC)**
- 10 **Fédération Internationale de Gymnastique (FIG)**

fans

108.4m

total fans

18.9m

fan growth

+29%

average IF
growth rate

engagements

3.1b

total engagements

+164%

year-on-year increase

review of content | Instagram



event content dominates

Instagram audiences engage most with content that consists of competitive highlights and athletes/teams celebrating their victories.

This type of content is highly effective (873m engagements in 2023), underscoring the importance of creating a spotlight for onsite footage, reactions and – most importantly – emotions.

Variety is key on Instagram. IFs should consider how they use high-quality images/videos to capture key moments onsite. Nevertheless, it's sometimes unplanned, off-the-cuff, raw footage that captures emotions best and resonates most with fans. Always be on your toes!

athlete-focused content

Instagram content delving into athletes' daily lives, e.g. family interactions/personal interests/health routines drove 12 x higher engagement than career highlights in 2023.

This is perfect for breaking up regular sports-led content and even filling quiet spells outside of competition season.

If IFs aren't already doing all they can to shine a spotlight on athlete personalities away from the field of play, they need to start now!

If fans have a stronger connection to your athletes, they'll ultimately have a stronger connection to your sport.

getting creative with performance & results

Behind-the-scenes content like tutorials/expert insights draws the highest average engagement (33k per post).

Instagram stands out for visual content so IFs should be looking to use storytelling formats such as Stories/Reels/long videos to their advantage.

Audiences want to feel connected to their sports and athletes.

If IFs want to improve their social engagement, they must look to create content that combines the visual tools that Instagram offers to provide a more insightful and intimate experience for fans.



INTERVIEW

Paul O'Neil

Head of Communications, Fédération Internationale de Gymnastique

A massive congrats on your Instagram success this year. What are the main reasons for this success?

We started the year with an excellent snapshot of our entire digital audience thanks to the comprehensive report we received in December 2022. This highlighted our strengths and weaknesses and where there was room for improvement. I think one of the reasons for our Instagram success was that we developed content that fans wanted to see more of, such as behind the scenes at events. The fact that we could use near-live clippings from our big events for the first time undoubtedly helped with the growth as well.

Furthermore, we had the FIG World Gymnaestrada 2023 in Amsterdam, a non-competitive event that brought together almost 20,000 gymnasts from all over the world and offered great opportunities for user-generated content. We also introduced an entirely new event – the Brick Parkour Asian Tour – which helped introduce the sport in five countries across the region and opened our channels up to new audiences.

Do you have a specific Instagram strategy? If yes, how does it differ from your other channels?

We don't have a specific Instagram strategy, but the platform offers us most flexibility in pushing out content, especially from events. In addition to the mix of different formats, we have great collaborative relationships on Instagram with our athletes.

How is your internal team structured to effectively manage Instagram at the same time as your other digital/social media channels?

We work with external partners to help produce and disseminate our content, with the FIG in-house communications team guiding overall strategy. We decide which platforms any content is best suited to and

keep an overall plan across all our social channels based on objectives and content available.

Do you have any learnings on how best to engage with fans on Instagram?

We experimented with our first AR filter on Instagram for the World Gymnaestrada 2023, where the user could see our different disciplines spinning around: when they pressed the button to take a selfie, a randomly chosen discipline was displayed above their head.

It was perfect for the event and the results were good. We also held competitions offering goodies from each of our world championships and these have worked very well. Keeping up a regular dialogue with some of our most influential gymnasts is a cornerstone of our strategy.

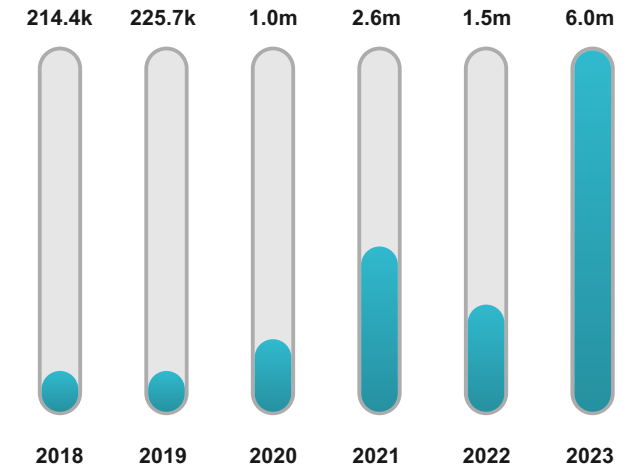
What trends – macro or micro – do you think will have the biggest impact on Instagram in the lead-up to Paris 2024?

On a micro level, I believe the new social media guidelines issued by IOC for Gangwon 2024 give the athletes a bit more freedom in terms of what they can do on social media. This will no doubt have an impact on Instagram, but how much International Federations might benefit remains to be seen. On the macro level, we are still following Threads with interest. At the moment it seems to work better for personal accounts, but things move quickly in social media.

What is one bit of advice you'd give IFs looking to improve their performance on Instagram?

Know your audience! Know who they are, where they are, and what they want.

FIG Instagram engagements



X/Twitter

Top 10 IFs

- 1 Volleyball World (FIVB)
- 2 Fédération Internationale de Basketball (FIBA)
- 3 World Athletics
- 4 International Cricket Council (ICC)
- 5 Union Cycliste Internationale (UCI)
- 6 Badminton World Federation (BWF)
- 7 World Rugby
- 8 World Aquatics
- 9 International Ice Hockey Federation (IIHF)
- 10 Fédération Internationale de Ski et du Snowboard (FIS)

fans

60.3m

total fans

5.5m

fan growth

+7%

average IF growth rate

engagements

72.6m

total engagements

+7%

year-on-year increase

review of content | X/Twitter



quality over quantity

X/Twitter remains the leading platform for number of posts. 46% of content focused on sharing live scores/event updates.

Despite a -12% drop in posts across many sports during the World Championships, X/Twitter still accumulated the highest average number of engagements (9.1 million for the year).

What does this tell us? High-quality, well-timed content – especially during major events – engage audiences better than high numbers of real-time updates.

At such busy times, trust your well-crafted content to cut through the cluster of posts to stand out from the crowd and resonate with your audience.

capturing relatability in athlete narratives

Athlete storytelling narratives earned 26 x higher engagement than simple summaries of achievements.

IFs should consider how they can transform athlete accolades into compelling stories of triumph/resilience.

Narrative-based content captures the personal triumphs/ challenges of athletes, which clearly appeals to audiences.

By showing the human side of athletes through relatable, inspiring stories, IFs can increase interaction with audiences and develop a better sense of community.

less is more

Posts containing 1–2 hashtags captured +72% of total engagements across the platform, indicating users still find/engage with hashtags as opposed to broader keywords alone.

Although some people feel hashtags are becoming less important to campaign reach, and platforms such as Instagram are actively limiting the number that can be used per post, an effective hashtag during live events allows fans to access a lot of information quickly, all in one place.

Hashtags are also a great tool to reinforce brand messaging and build familiarity across a campaign.

It's not necessary to stop using hashtags altogether, but rather consider why you use them and what purpose they serve.



YouTube

Top 10 IFs

- 1 Volleyball World (FIVB)
- 2 World Athletics
- 3 World Rugby
- 4 Fédération Internationale de Basketball (FIBA)
- 5 Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA)
- 6 Badminton World Federation (BWF)
- 7 United World Wrestling (UWW)
- 8 World Table Tennis (WTT)
- 9 International Cricket Council (ICC)
- 10 World Aquatics

fans

51.3m

total fans

6.3m

fan growth

+18%

average IF growth rate

video views

2.4b

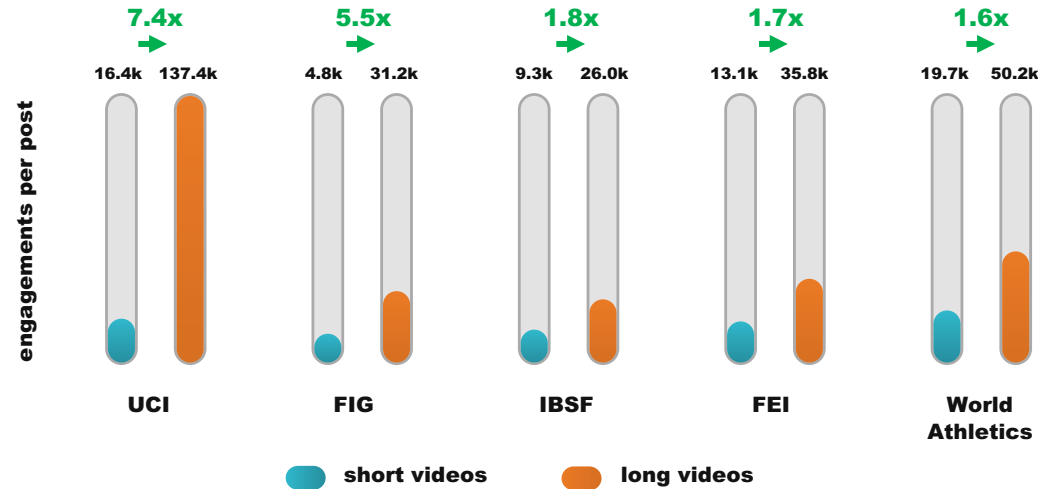
video views

+7%

year-on-year increase

TikTok getting longer, YouTube getting 'short'er

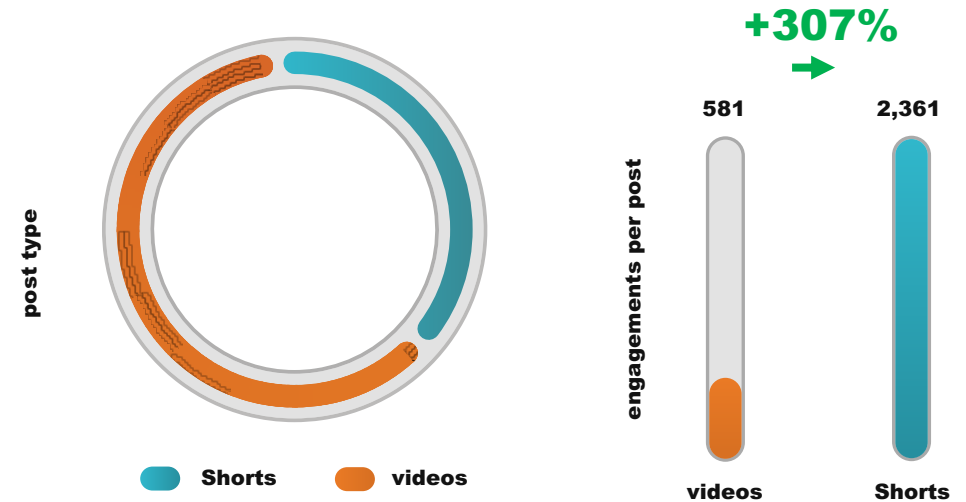
Average TikTok post length increased by +24%. The number of YouTube Shorts increased by +777%. Regular videos decreased by -16%.



While short videos continue to dominate TikTok, longer videos (over 1 minute) are on the rise (+196%) – and they grab just as much attention as shorter videos (43k average engagement per post).

IFs like UCI and FIG have found success with longer content. The message? If you've got a story to tell, don't be afraid to tell it on TikTok, even if it takes a bit of extra time!

TikTok has increased its maximum video length to 10 minutes for a reason. The platform itself suggests there's no one-size-fits-all solution so IFs need to work with the content tools at their disposal to create a well-balanced mix of long and short-form content.



Traditional YouTube videos still make up 64% of posts, yet Shorts outperform videos (+124% more overall engagement). On average, Shorts generate +307% more engagements per post than traditional videos. The appeal for shorter, digestible content creates opportunities for IFs to diversify their content on the platform: introduce highlight snippets/snappy event promotion/teaser videos to encourage an appetite for live broadcasts/longer-form videos.

The brevity of short videos increases the likelihood of content virality: creating entertaining, easy to consume content increases potential audience reach to new demographic groups/regions. In 'short', Shorts offer IFs an opportunity to further engage with a diverse audience.



TikTok

Top 10 IFs

- 1 World Rugby
- 2 Volleyball World (FIVB)
- 3 United World Wrestling (UWW)
- 4 Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA)
- 5 Fédération Internationale de Basketball (FIBA)
- 6 Union Cycliste Internationale (UCI)
- 7 World Aquatics
- 8 World Taekwondo (WT)
- 9 World Athletics
- 10 Fédération Equestre Internationale (FEI)



fans

44.5m

total fans

17.4m

fan growth

+253%

average IF growth rate



engagements

510.6m

engagements

+36%

year-on-year increase



video views

6.7bn

video views

+62%

year-on-year increase



INTERVIEW

Gordon Templeman

Director, Commercial Operations & Communications, United World Wrestling

A massive congrats on your TikTok success, ranking 3rd on the platform in 2023. What were the main reasons for your success?

Not being afraid to take risks from the outset. A stumbling block could have been selecting which of various new platforms to focus on. However, we took a step back and said this is just another opportunity. We didn't put unnecessary pressure or timeline for it to be a success but focussed on what responded well and what did not from a performance standpoint. We really did see it as a chance to connect with a new audience.

Do you have a specific TikTok strategy? If yes, how does it differ from your other channels?

Our TikTok strategy is completely different to our other platforms as we realised early on that what works on Instagram or YouTube doesn't necessarily work on TikTok. We generally approach TikTok with a far more personal approach; we want our audience to know it's an individual behind the account rather than a big organisation. We've found this approach has helped us cultivate a loyal and engaged following.

How is your internal team structured to effectively manage TikTok at the same time as your many other digital/social media channels?

Where TikTok differs from the other social media platforms is that UWW's Head of Creative, Josh Halvatzis, supported by the team, plays a significant role in the content we post on TikTok. I think the creative angle has resonated with the TikTok audience, resulting in high growth.

It's important to know your audience and have a consistent approach. Having a smaller team focussing on TikTok builds a stronger connection with your followers. More than any other platform, you need someone on the team who understands the audience and the platform in general.

How do you plan to overcome the challenge of having limited video footage from the Olympics to use on social, especially TikTok?

Preparation is key to using any archival video you have the rights for and putting together a narrative for the Olympics.

It is a challenge, but we understand the rights of the Olympic broadcast partners must be respected. It created an opportunity for content to be seen by a wider Olympic audience so we try and make a positive out of the limitations.

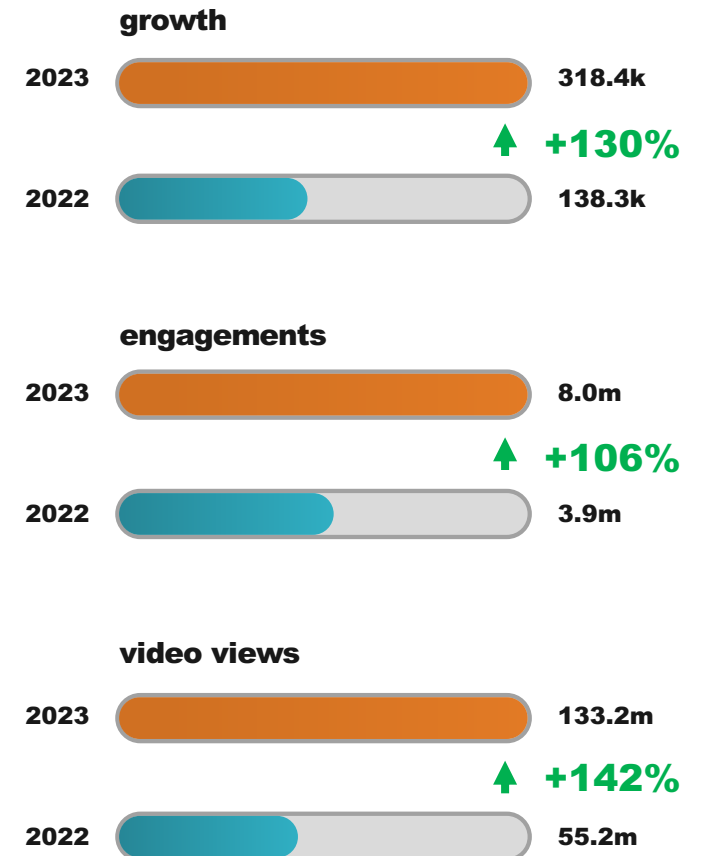
With all social media platforms, adaptation is key. Every month there's a new trend or editing style so this will be no different for us. We'll try our best to find what works.

What is one bit of advice you'd give IFs looking to improve their performance on TikTok?

Consistency is crucial. When we began using TikTok, we would average around 600 views per video so it's very easy to get disheartened and give up on it. TikTok can be ruthless, too: what you think might do well can in fact perform badly. It takes a lot of trial and error and consistency before you start seeing the benefits.

Think outside of what you may traditionally have done for other social media channels and complement that with the strength of past achievements. Find content that reaches a wider audience, whether it be to target the young, a theme that touches on lifestyle, or of cultural significance.

Lastly, there are specific details you must always have evolving with TikTok – once you believe you have the pulse of the platform, it can change! Know when to swallow your pride and make modifications to increase your chances of success.





INTERVIEW

Arthur Guisasola

International Sports Partnerships Lead, TikTok

Being successful on TikTok is all about staying on top of the latest trends and algorithm changes. Are there any changes IFs should be aware of in 2024?

Achieving success on TikTok requires publishers to curate and share a diverse range of content that encompasses such things as trends, highlights and behind-the-scenes glimpses. The TikTok algorithm is recognised for fostering interest-based communities which allow publishers to engage a broader audience by crafting varied content types. Authentic content that is native to the platform and provides behind-the-scenes views or real-life experiences work best on TikTok.

Publishers who strategically integrate a well-balanced mix of both long and short-form content plus photo mode, consistently witness greater success on TikTok. Videos longer than a minute are widely consumed by our community, as are photo carousels that tell stories in unique ways. There's no one-size-fits-all solution, so always try to work with the content tools at your disposal. Most importantly, interact with your community and give them what they're looking for!

All IFs have their eyes set on Paris 2024. What advice do you have for those IFs looking to capitalise on the Olympics, engaging with fans and reaching new audiences on TikTok?

When we speak to International Federations, we advise them to create a diverse range of content to effectively engage a broad cross-section of TikTok users. We have seen that videos featuring highlights and training, behind-the-scenes footage showcasing athletes, and athlete interviews that give a sneak peek into their lives, are especially popular.

International Federations are the go-between of athletes and fans, so find unique ways to empower those athletes and give fans the content they're craving. Every athlete has their own unique story, but more than that they will each have a preference on how they want to 'show up' on the platform.

Given the unparalleled access that IFs have to athletes, this can act as a key differentiator, especially when coupled with TikTok video-editing tools alongside the use of trends, effects and sounds readily available on our platform.

With video footage being limited at the Olympics, do you have advice for IFs on how to maximise the content they can access? Are there any particular content themes you think will perform well away from sports footage?

International Federations will have more access to their athletes prior to the Games. Take advantage of these moments to capture content from training sessions, interview the athletes, and film some unique behind-the-scenes moments. The TikTok community love getting to know more about their heroes and how they've prepared for the Games!

When the Games are live, International Federations are encouraged to leverage archive footage to celebrate athletes who are performing on the day, as well as utilising photo mode to share stories about their athletes as they compete. Also, make sure to take advantage of the space and access you'll have during the Games to find out how to bring that experience to your community on TikTok.

To achieve success on TikTok and drive the highest engagement levels, you'll need a nuanced mix of diverse content styles to ensure fans are getting all the content they want.

What has TikTok itself got planned for Paris 2024? How will the platform be pushing sports content during the Games?

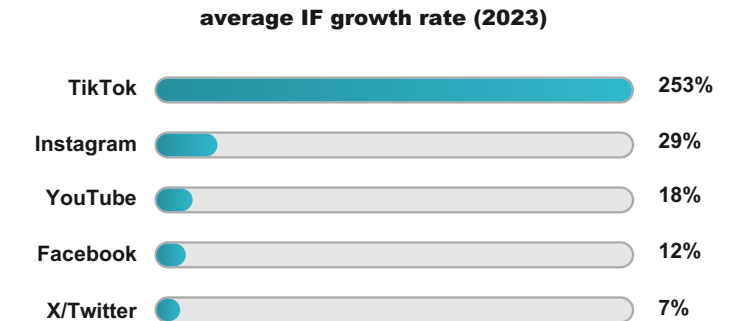
In the UK, we have a very exciting partnership with both TeamGB and ParalympicsGB, but more broadly our objective is to engage with as many touchpoints as possible.

This involves collaborations with the IOC, broadcasters and International Federations to ensure optimal coverage of highlights. We're working closely with the Olympic and Paralympic movement and their stakeholders to provide the content we know our community will love.

Drawing inspiration from the engagement witnessed at Tokyo 2020, we anticipate our dedicated community of Olympic and Paralympic enthusiasts will actively contribute by creating content around their unique Games-related experiences. This community engagement – from producing their own stitches of videos to jumping on the latest Paris 24 trend – is what makes TikTok special and what makes content fly on the platform!

In just one word, describe the next twelve months for TikTok

Thrilling!





future focus

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- 28 overall channel use
- 29 channel spotlight
- 30 the impact of AI





INTERVIEW

Michelle Sammet

Head of Stakeholder Relations, World Athletics

Three years on from its launch, World Athletics is celebrating the success of its #WeGrowAthletics campaign, built around International Women's Day and designed to do more to improve gender equity and close the gender gap in athletics. Why do you think tackling gender imbalance is so important?

The campaign was designed to recognise that gender equality plays a huge role in growing our sport globally. If you look at athletics on the field of play, we are doing really well. At the World Indoor Championships in Glasgow, for example, there were more female than male competitors for the first time in our sport's history, although our events have always been quite balanced in terms of opportunity.

But this hasn't been the case across the board, especially in terms of leadership. So, with #WeGrowAthletics we wanted to commit publicly to some concrete and specific pledges to make changes to the gender balance at the very top of our sport. By committing to these pledges, it meant that we could hold ourselves accountable.

One of the things our President Sebastian Coe has said consistently is that if we are a balanced organisation at leadership level, we will be a well-governed sport; and as a well-governed sport, we will be able to protect the future of athletics. Three years in, the case is being proven.

What are your desired outcomes from this continued project?

We wanted to scrutinise our ecosystem as an organisation: what we do in functional areas and where there is room for improvement. We've looked at communications, competition, development and events to evaluate where there are gaps that need filling.

Another example is investigating our freelance network. We realised it was largely male dominated. So, we've been identifying ways to develop female talent – through our media development programmes and partnering with organisations like Black Women Photographers on certain projects.

One of the big challenges we're aware of is that educational workshops may not be as accessible for women who are caregivers or have other responsibilities. We've made sure our courses are now available as eLearning courses that can be taken by anyone, anywhere in the world, and in their own time.

What additional resources or strategies have you had to put in place to support these outcomes?

The big thing for us was to put our pledges out there and commit to taking action. We challenged our stakeholders to do the same and have had pledges from partners such as Mondo, World Athletics Series Event Local Organising Committees and others. It's about highlighting the fact that we need our partners to buy into the same mission and do things in their respective areas of expertise to help support women.

We've got a particularly strong Gender Leadership Taskforce that drives us forward and holds us accountable. They help us challenge ourselves to address what we're lacking. So far, it's been extremely encouraging to see how that's been received by everyone involved – from the Member Federation level all the way to local clubs.

What has your research identified?

It's been more than a research project for us. It's a way to collect the data we need to support positive change and then about implementing those changes.

We've made some great strides over the years. For example, a big focus – even prior to this campaign – were reforms introduced by President Sebastian Coe in 2016, where clear structures were put in place to help us move towards gender equality at the leadership level. The idea was to be a gender-equal Council by 2027 but we actually managed to reach that goal in 2023. We now have a fully gender-equal Council and an average female representation of 49.5% across our four Commissions – Development, Governance, Competition, and Athletes' Commission.

We've also analysed, highlighted and reported instances of gender-based abuse online. Specifically, we've seen that female athletes are targeted a lot more online than their male counterparts. It's important to make platforms aware of this and make sure athletes are protected.

What advice would you give to other IFs wanting to support gender equality/women's sport?

I think the biggest advice to give to other International Federations is to take an honest look at themselves, the data they have and what data they're missing, and implement changes based on the research.

We've put quotas in place for our Council and we've set ourselves realistic targets with regards to what we knew needed to happen at the Member Federation and Area level so women could progress in leadership positions. It's good to set goals and measurable KPIs that you can look back on to see whether you're on track.

What decisions have you made within your digital strategy to ensure you actively support gender equality?

One thing we are putting an emphasis on is who is creating the content, because the voices that tell stories are equally as important as the people they talk about. They can provide a different perspective. And that's not just regarding gender but about where they're coming from in the world. It's about focusing on the inspirational stories within our sport. There are so many incredible stories of athletes who have returned after maternity, but there are absolutely amazing stories, too, of – for example – female coaches or technical officials.

For the last three years, we've celebrated World Athletics Women's Week, during which our content is about inspiring women, created and published by women. It's like a mini celebration of everything we try to do throughout the year, just amplified during this time.

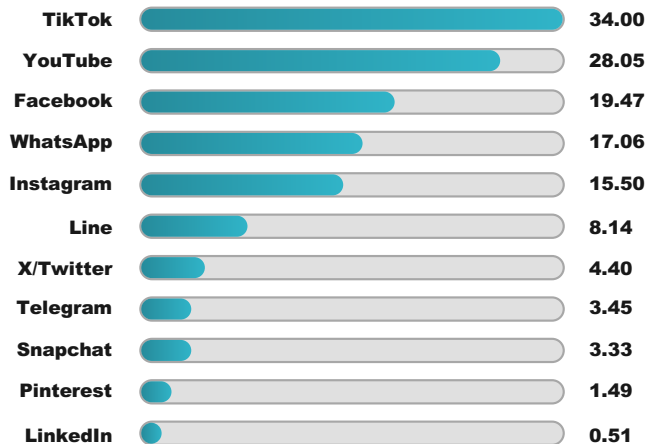
overall channel use

Let's consider the current landscape. Globally, there are now approximately 5 billion social media users. On average, they spend 2 hours and 23 minutes a day on social media.

As we know, IFs have limited resources and need to be strategic (choosing when and where to spend resource) in their social media approach to maximise engagement/growth. Two key factors that influence their decisions are (1) market size and (2) user engagement time.

To put it simply, IFs need to consider both reach (total active users) and engagement (average user time spent) on each platform.

average time per month that active users spent on each platform* (hours/minutes)



Based on this, there are a number of areas to be considered.

growth opportunities

Platforms with a lower percentage of IF fans but a high number of active users (like YouTube with 2.5bn) could represent a significant opportunity for growth and engagement with new fans.

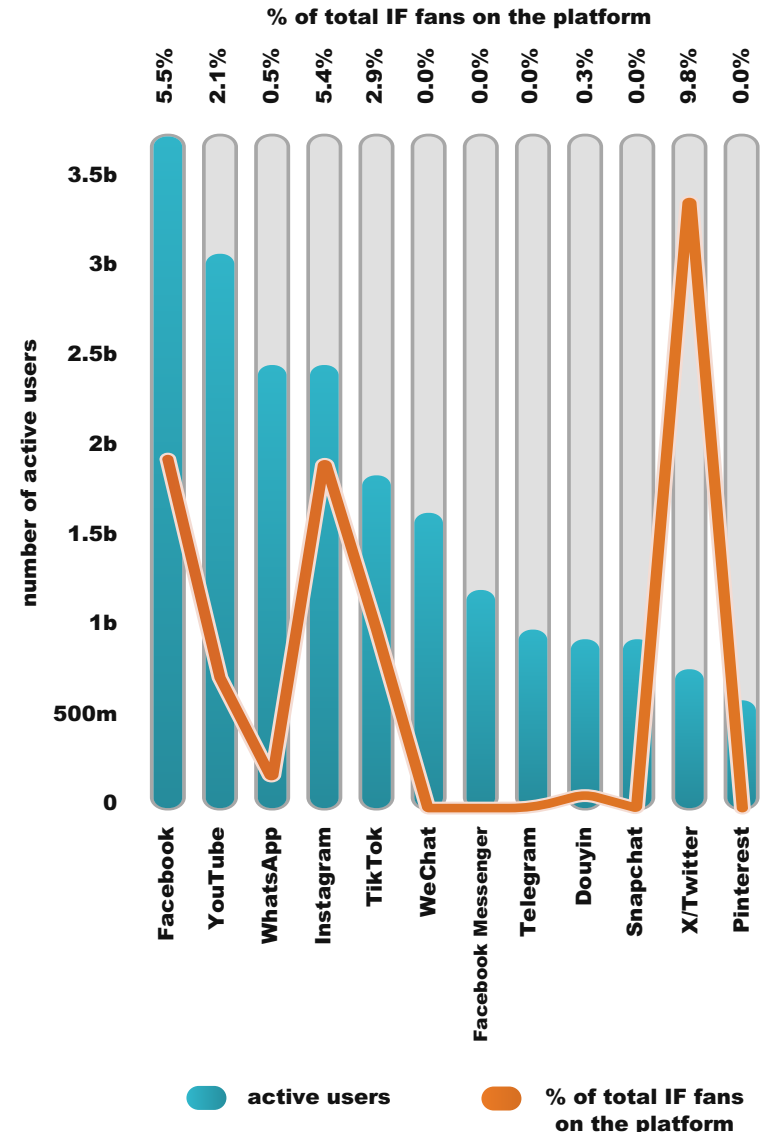
budget allocation

Decide to allocate more resources to platforms that are growing rapidly or where fans are more active (just ensure they are real people not just bots!) to maximise reach and engagement. Or reduce budgets for other platforms.

messaging apps

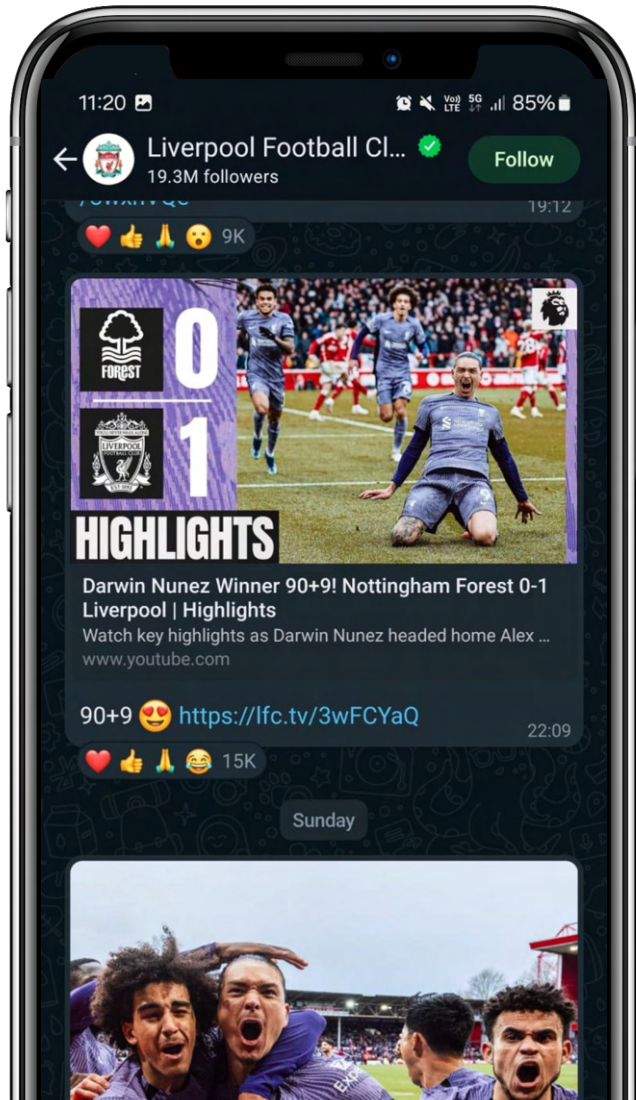
WhatsApp and WeChat, despite having large user bases of 2 billion and 1.336 billion respectively, have a very low percentage of IF fans (on WhatsApp it's 5%). Despite being used primarily for messaging, IFs should consider them based on user base and new functionality to help build relationships with fans.

Each IF must build its social media strategy according to the specific interests of their audience. It's also essential to incorporate broader macro factors into their strategy to ensure a comprehensive approach to engagement/marketing across social media platforms.



*source: wearesocial, Global Digital Report 2024, DATA.ai intelligence: Android app between 01 July and 30 September 2023.

channel spotlight: WhatsApp



Messaging apps, from the likes of Line and Telegram through to WhatsApp, have huge potential if used in the right way. Over 2 billion people use WhatsApp, for example, but over 95% of IFs don't currently use it. Here's why it's a good platform to launch on.



global reach & accessibility

WhatsApp boasts over 2 billion active users across more than 180 countries, making it one of the most universally accessible messaging apps. This widespread adoption is a significant advantage for IFs looking to connect with fans worldwide by offering a direct channel to engage audiences in various regions (including those in less accessible areas where other social media platforms might not be as popular or freely available).



real-time updates & notifications

WhatsApp facilitates instant communication, enabling IFs to send real-time updates about events, scores/results and breaking news. This immediacy is crucial for keeping fans engaged, especially during live events when timely updates can significantly enhance fan experience.



interactive engagement features

Beyond simple text messaging, WhatsApp supports various media types, including images/videos/voice messages/documents, all of which provide a rich palette for creative/engaging content. Interactive features (e.g. polls/quizzes) can be implemented through 3rd-party tools, further increasing engagement and providing valuable audience feedback/insights.



cost-effectiveness

Launching a communication channel on WhatsApp is relatively low-cost, especially compared to traditional media or extensive social media campaigns. Such cost-effectiveness, combined with the platform's vast reach/ engagement potential, offers a high return on investment for IFs looking to maximise their marketing/communication efforts.



community building

WhatsApp groups can serve as communities where fans from around the world connect/share experiences and discuss their favourite sports or events. This sense of community not only enhances fan loyalty but also amplifies word-of-mouth marketing as enthusiastic fans are more likely to spread positive messages about their experiences.

conclusion

For IFs aiming to broaden their reach, deepen fan engagement and streamline communications, WhatsApp presents a compelling solution. Its global reach, engagement capabilities and cost-effectiveness make it an ideal platform for organisations wanting to connect with their existing fan base and tap into new audiences worldwide.

why is AI part of the resourcing mix?

While AI is a major buzzword, it stands out significantly from concepts like the metaverse and VR. We believe it has the proven potential to improve efficiencies and create new growth opportunities for IFs. With easy access to platforms such as ChatGPT and Gemini, there are several areas where we see it having immediate impact.



AI impact



creative

creating a variety of content

With the correct inputs, AI can produce a wide range of content. Image and video generation enables creatives to visualise their ideas quickly. It also allows organisations with smaller budgets to create content for their social media platforms



communications

language translation & localisation

AI tools can swiftly translate content into multiple languages, taking local nuances into account. This ensures that communications are accessible to a global audience and localises broadening reach.



insights

performance measurement and optimization

Through the analysis of engagement metrics, and other key performance indicators, AI can help teams analyse and understand what works best, thus allowing them to continually optimise their digital marketing strategies for better results



operations

automated workflows

Routine tasks such as scheduling posts/sending emails/sorting inquiries can be automated, freeing up team members to focus on more strategic initiatives.

Redtorch

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Ultimately, we're driven by our fundamental mission to create partnerships that ensure sport changes the world and improves people's lives.



✉ hello@redtorch.sport

🏠 Redtorch
Unit 37
Tileyard Studios
Tileyard Road
London N7 9AH

🏠 Maison du Sport International
Avenue de Rhodanie 54
1007 Lausanne
Switzerland

key contributors

This report has been compiled by experts from the Redtorch Research & Performance Lab, Communications Suite and Creative Studio.



Chris Argyle-Robinson
Research & Strategy Director,
Co-founder



Tom Lloyd-Evans
Performance & Insights Manager



Karishma Riar
Senior Research & Insights Manager



Alex Ross
Global Director of Sport,
Co-founder



Jonny Murch
CEO,
Co-founder



Jess Reus
Head of Communications,
Women's Sport Lead



Rozie Slack
Digital & Social Media Manager



Jamie Skelly
Digital & Social Media Executive



Brad Sadler
Graphic Designer



Millie Andrew
Project Manager