



STATE OF SPONSORED SOCIAL REPORT

A Comprehensive Look
at Instagram Branded
Posts in Sports

Sponsored Social Media in Sports

How Instagram branded content fits social media's engagement economy

The athlete and influencer marketing industry is big business on social media. Nowhere has this become more clear than Instagram in the form of Branded Content. You've surely seen it across your feed: "Paid partnership with brand."

Brands of all sizes now look to accounts with influence to power their message and media on Instagram – to promote products, amplify sponsorships, and bring awareness and engagement to their brand. Perhaps no industry has adopted this engagement strategy more emphatically than sports sponsorship.

Today, brands across every vertical commit big budgets to sponsor teams and leagues in sports, aiming to reach and engage those organization's ultra-passionate fan

bases. Rather than limiting sponsorship activations to live broadcasts and in-arena opportunities, these brands are enhancing effectiveness of their sponsorships on Instagram through influential accounts – athletes, influencers, teams, and leagues.

These social media power-players have the attention of their audiences that brands can only dream of. Sure, a sponsor may be paying for affiliation with that team or league, but limiting distribution to brand-owned channels will severely limit the effectiveness of any sponsorship.

Instead, these brands now look to the teams and leagues they sponsor, and the athletes and influencers associated with those organizations to drive impact and maximize sponsorship dollars with off-channel activations.

And while teams and leagues have massive fan bases that translate to huge social media followings, there's no replacing the engagement made possible when influential people publish branded posts.

In this study, we analyzed more than 36,000 branded Instagram posts published on behalf of more than 3,200 sponsors in sports.

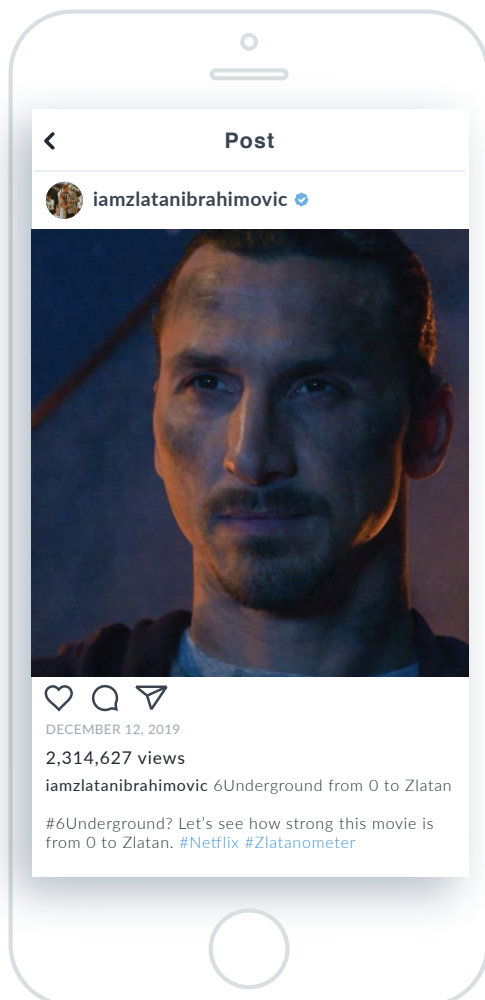
We convey which accounts receive the most opportunities to share branded content, what types of posts perform best, and ultimately, who really creates impact with engagement on Instagram.

Why engagement?

Engagement is the pulse of impact on social media. When a user engages with a post, it's proof that they stopped, viewed, and interacted with that content. It can't be faked or paid for. Many sponsors list engagement as the leading indicator of social media success, and we believe the same.

It's the building block with which brand affinity and even buying intent starts. When you can establish an engaged audience, you can drive meaningful results...

... And one group that we studied dominated all others in terms of audience engagement.



The Scope of Branded Content in Sports

To understand the scope of Instagram branded content in sports... we had to track it all. Rather than digging through every post that including #ad, #brandpartner, etc., in the copy, we chose to instead identify all posts published that were tagged as Instagram branded content, using the “paid partnership with brand” tag.

Selecting only official Instagram branded content allowed us to track every branded post shared on behalf of more than 3,200 sponsors in sports.

Analyzing the 36,000-plus posts from over 1,600 team, league, athlete, influencer, and media personality accounts showed us the breadth and power of branded content on the platform.

We share a comprehensive breakdown Instagram branded content volume and performance in sports.

- What account types earn the most engagement
- The sponsors that sourced the most branded content
- Athletes who shared the most branded content on behalf of sponsors
- Teams that shared the most branded content on behalf of sponsors
- Leagues that shared the most branded content on behalf of sponsors
- How different types content performed in terms of engagement

What was the Dataset?

INSTAGRAM BRANDED CONTENT

36,031	3,272	1,670	2.2B	
POSTS	SPONSORS	ACCOUNTS	ENGAGEMENTS	
Photos	Videos	Albums	IGTV	
14,027	15,155	6,631	700	
Likes	Comments	Video Views		
2.1B	19.6M	5.1B		
Athletes	Influencers	Teams	Leagues	Media
886	291	293	60	140
Athlete Posts	Influencer Posts	Team Posts	League Posts	Media Post
4,243	2,683	15,133	5,850	8,122

NOTE: Data analyzed all 2019 tagged posts “Paid partnership with brand”.

What is Branded Content?

INSTAGRAM BRANDED CONTENT

Instagram defines branded content as a creator or publisher's content that features or is influenced by a business partner for an exchange of value (for example, where the business partner has paid the creator or publisher).

Instagram policies require creators and publishers to tag business partners in their branded content posts when there's an exchange of value between a creator or publisher and a business partner, resulting in the "Paid partnership with Brand" tag.

Account
Mallory Pugh

Account Type
Athlete

Team
USWNT

League
N/A

Sport
Soccer

Publish Date
6/6/2019

Sponsor
Johnson & Johnson

Content Type
Photo

Followers
321,172

Likes
29,996

Comments
104

Engagements
30,100
[Likes + Comments]

Engagement Rate
9.4%
[Engagement/Followers]

Caption:
malpugh What does #BecauseSheCan mean to me? It means never settling, always pushing forward, and blazing a path for the next generation of female leaders. Tell me your #BecauseSheCan story and learn more at healthyessentials.com/m-ls-us-soccer-partnership

What are Account Types?

INSTAGRAM BRANDED CONTENT

Account Types define who (or what entity) shared the branded content on behalf of a sponsor.

For this report, the Account Types included are:

- + Athletes
- + Influencers
- + Teams
- + Leagues
- + Media Personalities

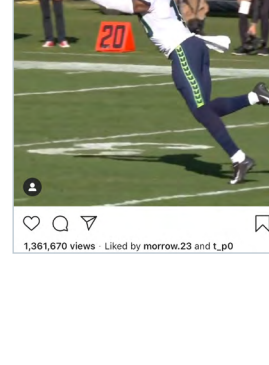
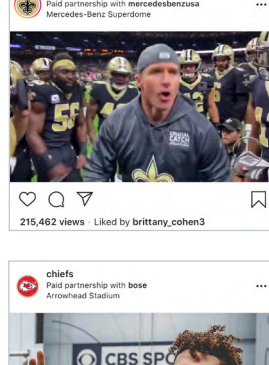
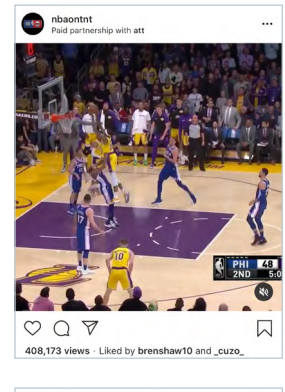
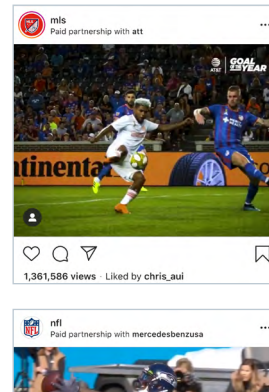
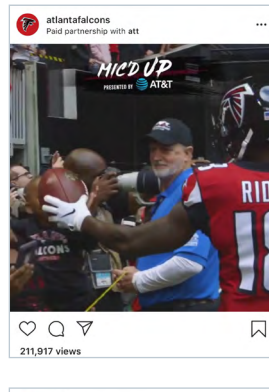
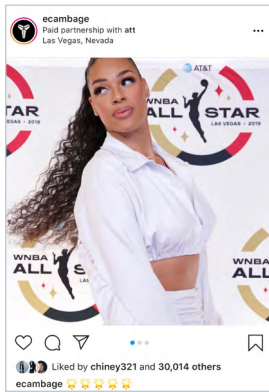
Athletes

Influencers

Teams

Leagues

Media



What are Post Types?

INSTAGRAM BRANDED CONTENT

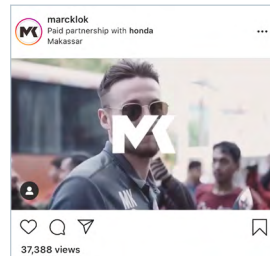
Instagram allows for several content types on the platform. For this report, we focused on “permanent” content that remains on an accounts feed and did not include Instagram Stories or Reels, as they were not yet available during the report’s timeline.

We measured engagement of photos, videos, albums, and IGTV.

Photos



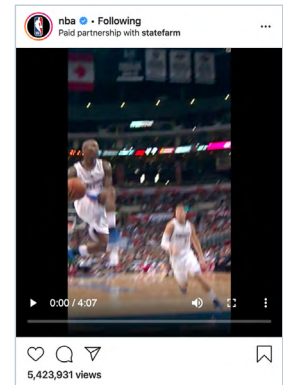
Videos



Albums



IGTV



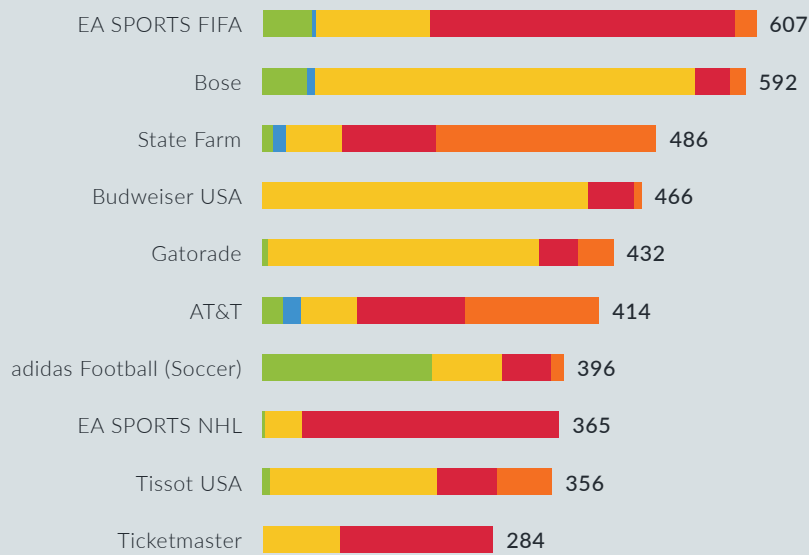


Which Sponsors Sourced Branded Content in 2019?

Opendorse analyzed more than 36,000
thousand Instagram branded posts from
athletes, influencers, teams, leagues, and
media accounts

We found the top-10 most active sponsors in sports on Instagram.

- + 11.8% of their sponsored content was published by athlete partners
- + 16.2% published by league accounts
- + 41.99% published by team accounts
- + 22.5% published by media accounts
- + 7.4% published by influencers

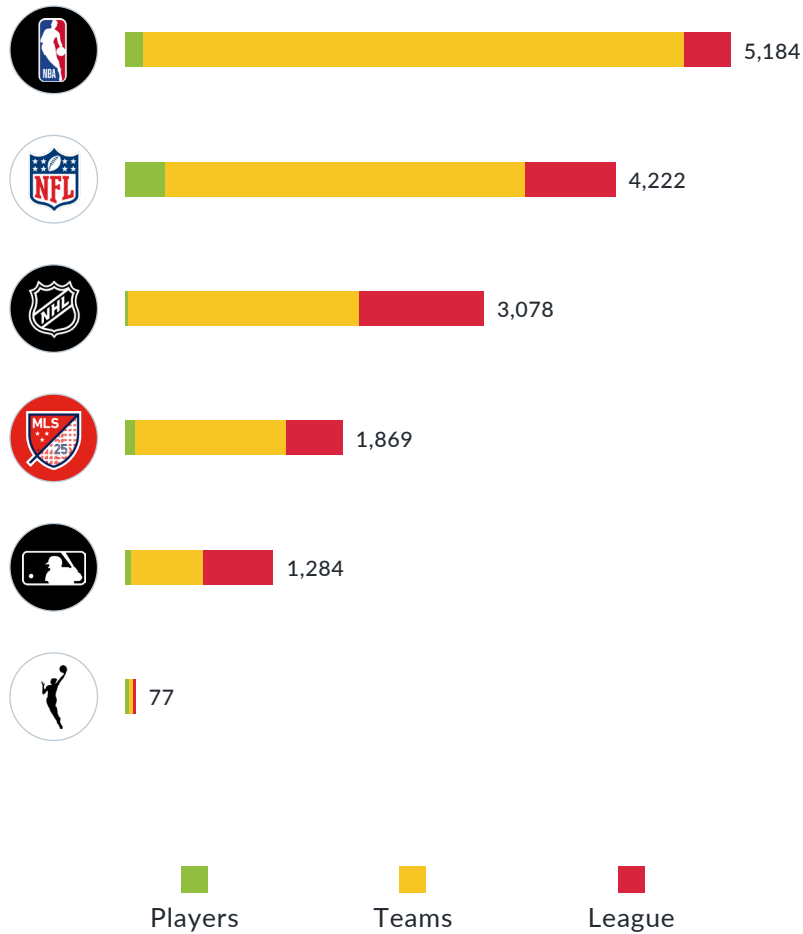


■ Athletes
 ■ Influencers
 ■ Teams
 ■ Leagues
 ■ Media

Athlete, Team, and League accounts associated with the NBA published 5,184 branded posts on behalf of sponsors.

The most active sponsors sourcing content from these accounts include:

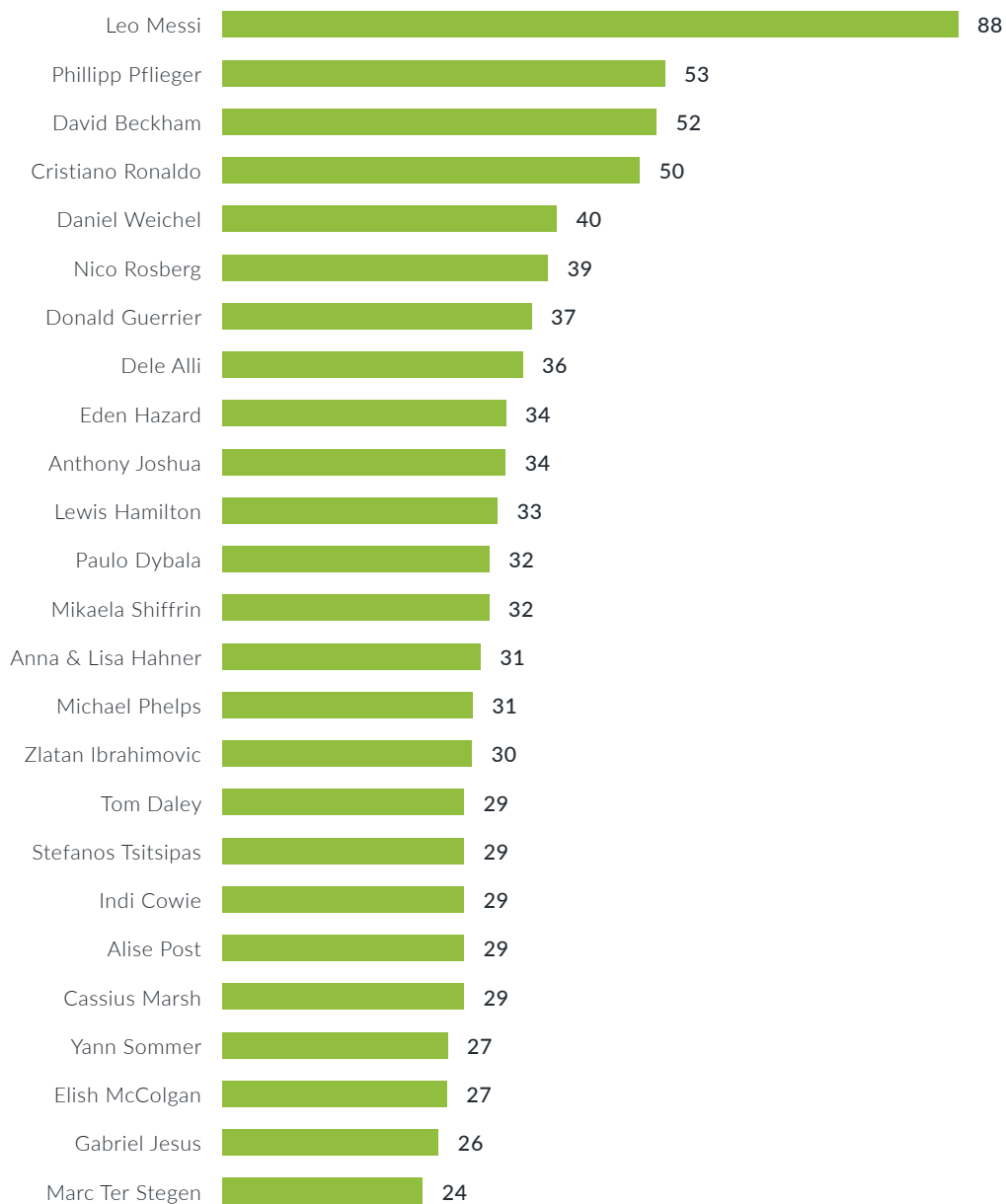
- + Budweiser (318 posts)
- + Tissot (275 posts)
- + State Farm (148 posts)
- + Putnam Investments (139 posts)



Athletes who Published the Most Branded Content

Athlete Accounts

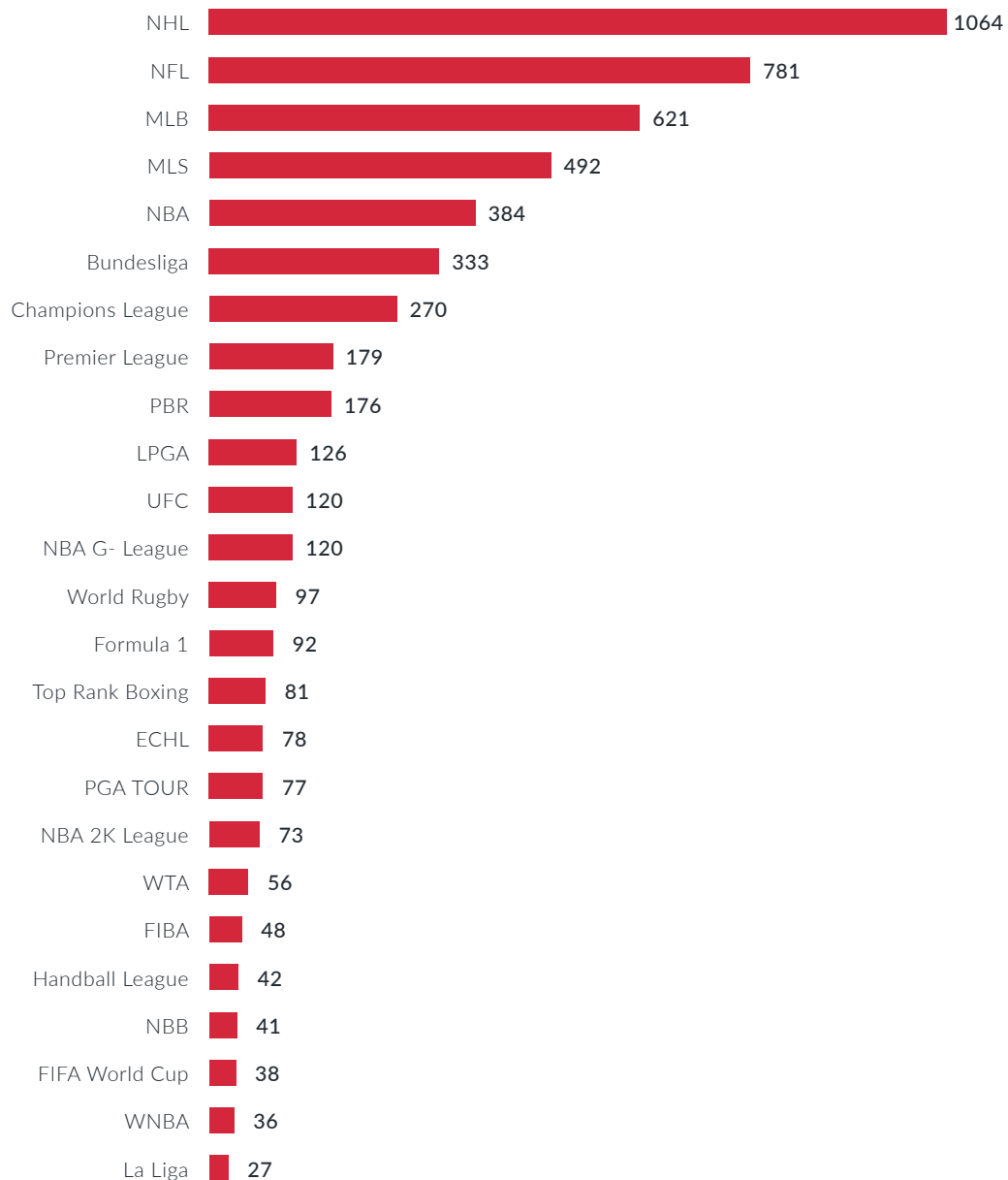
25 Most Active Athletes
2019 INSTAGRAM BRANDED CONTENT



Leagues that Published the Most Branded Content

League Accounts

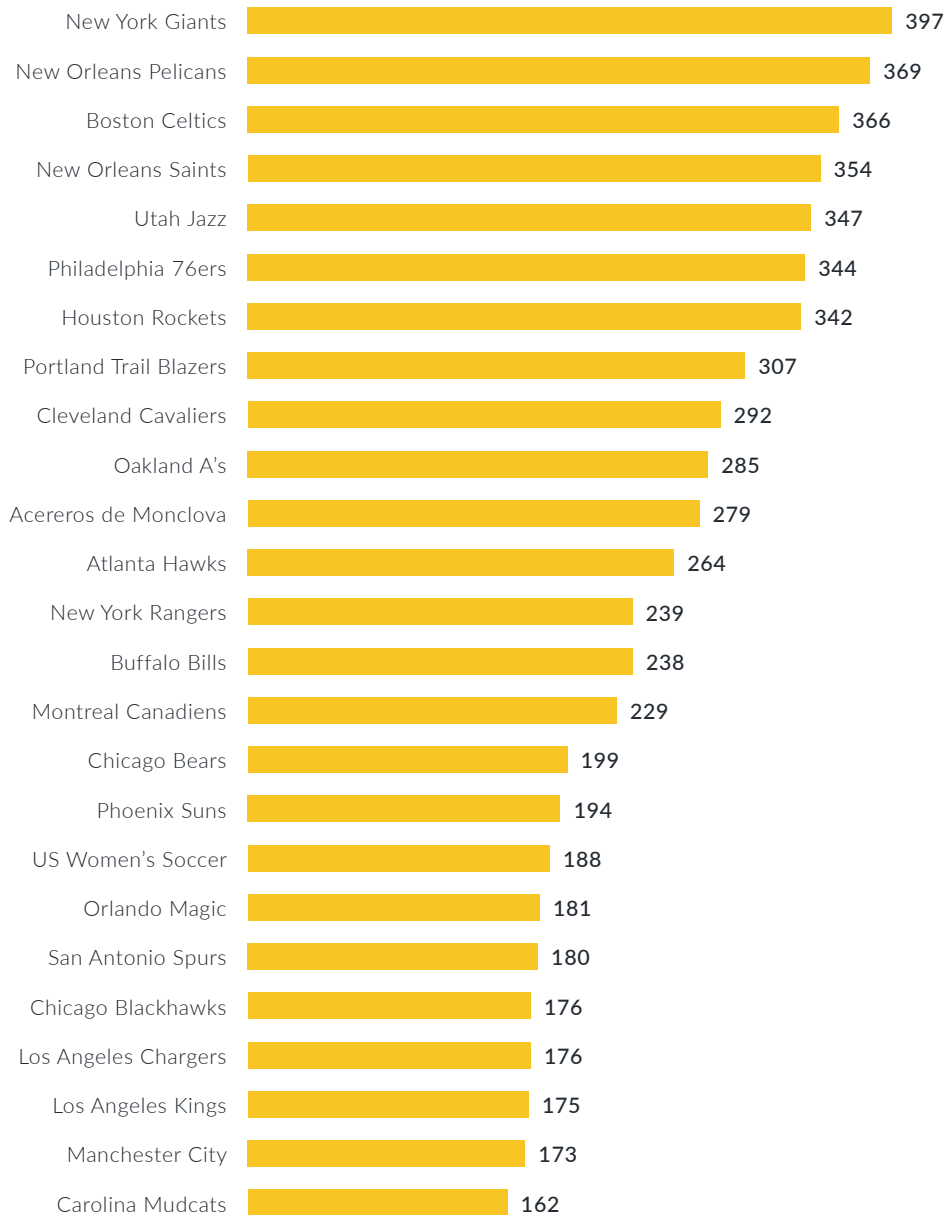
25 Most Active Leagues
2019 INSTAGRAM BRANDED CONTENT



Teams that Published the Most Branded Content

Team Accounts

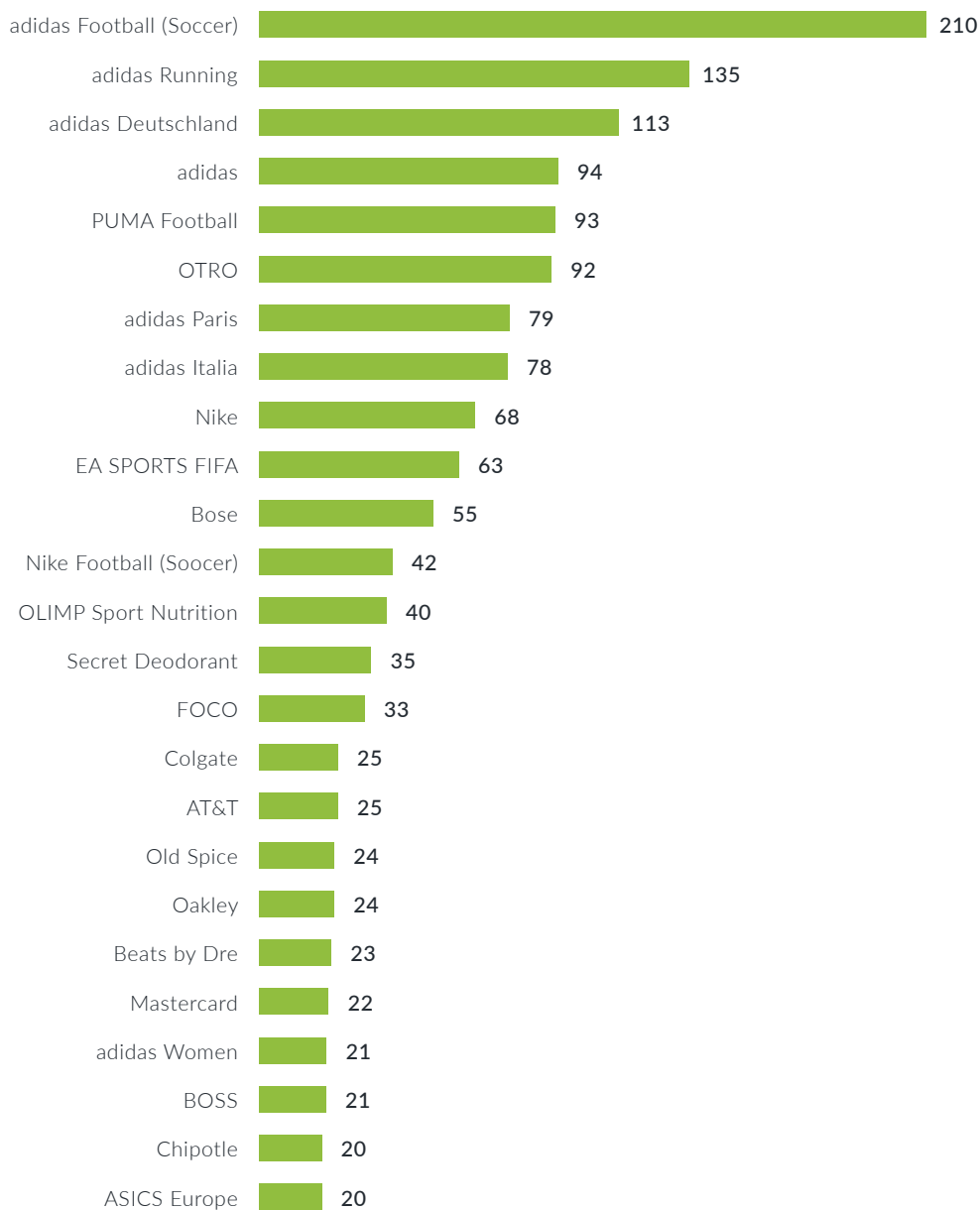
25 Most Active Teams
2019 INSTAGRAM BRANDED CONTENT



Sponsors that Sourced Branded Content with Athlete, Team, and League Accounts

Athlete Accounts

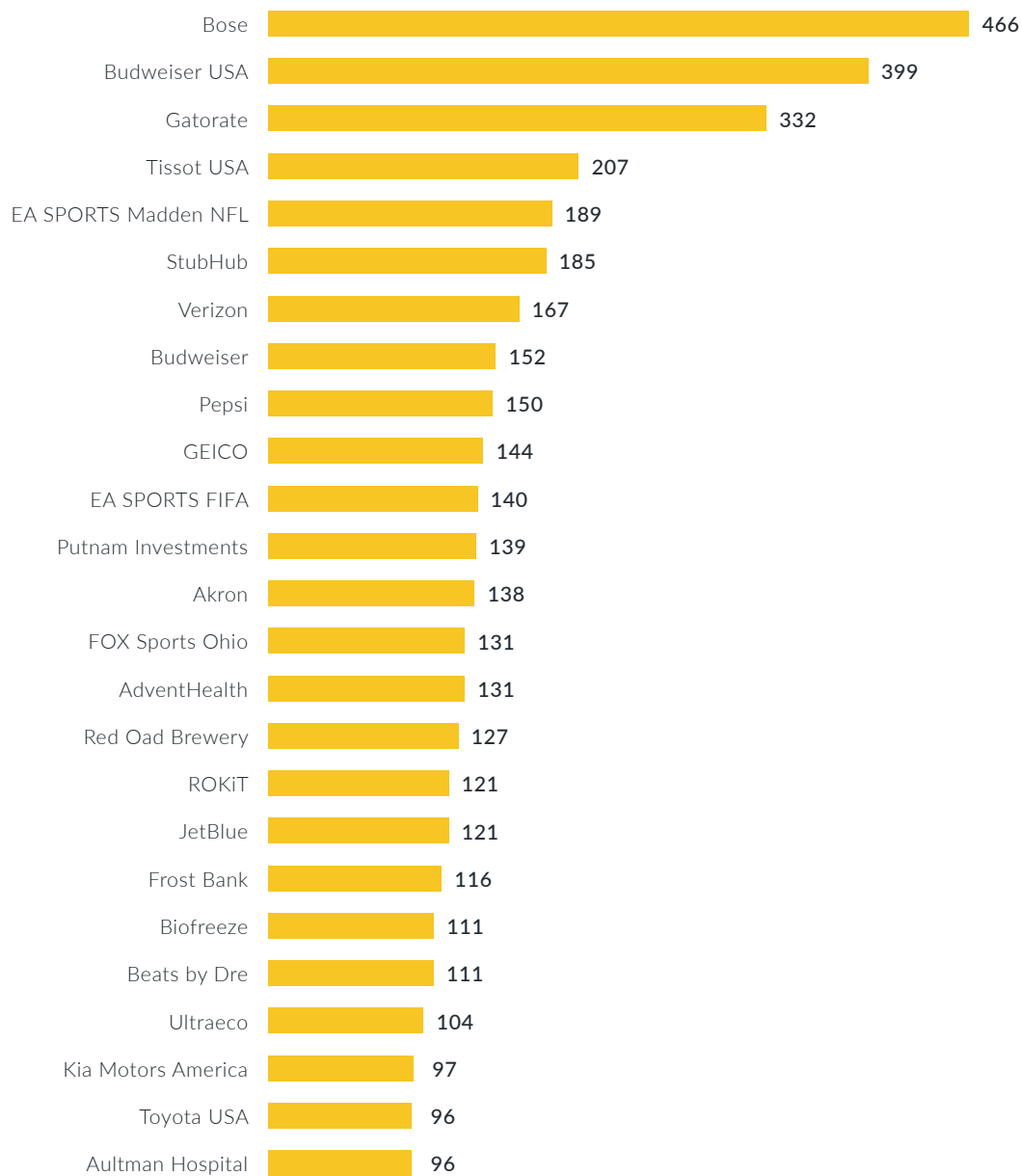
25 Most Active Sponsors
2019 INSTAGRAM BRANDED CONTENT



Sponsors that Sourced Branded Content with Athlete, Team, and League Accounts

Team Accounts

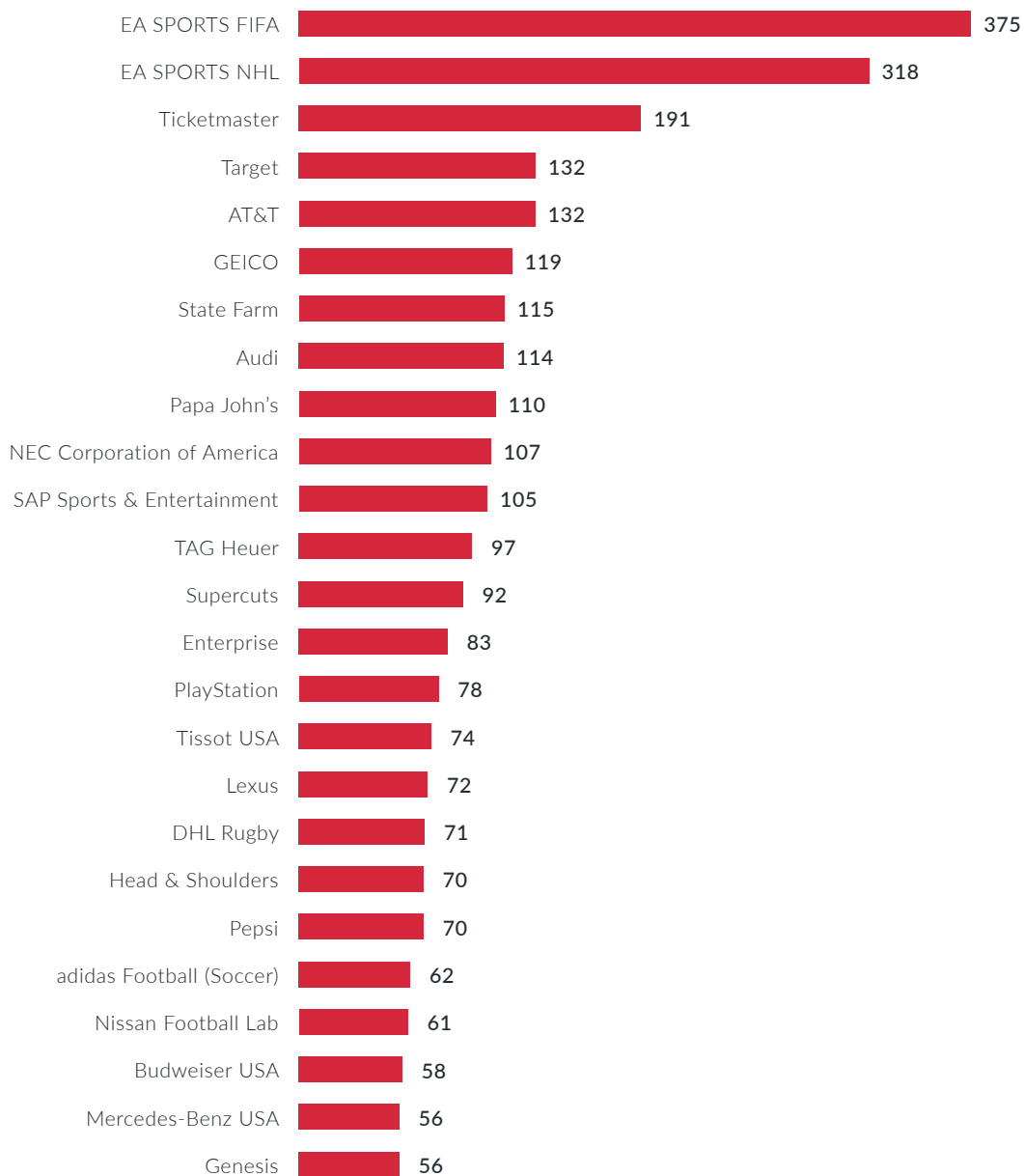
25 Most Active Sponsors
2019 INSTAGRAM BRANDED CONTENT



Sponsors that Sourced Branded Content with Athlete, Team, and League Accounts

League Accounts

25 Most Active Sponsors
2019 INSTAGRAM BRANDED CONTENT





So... how did it all perform?

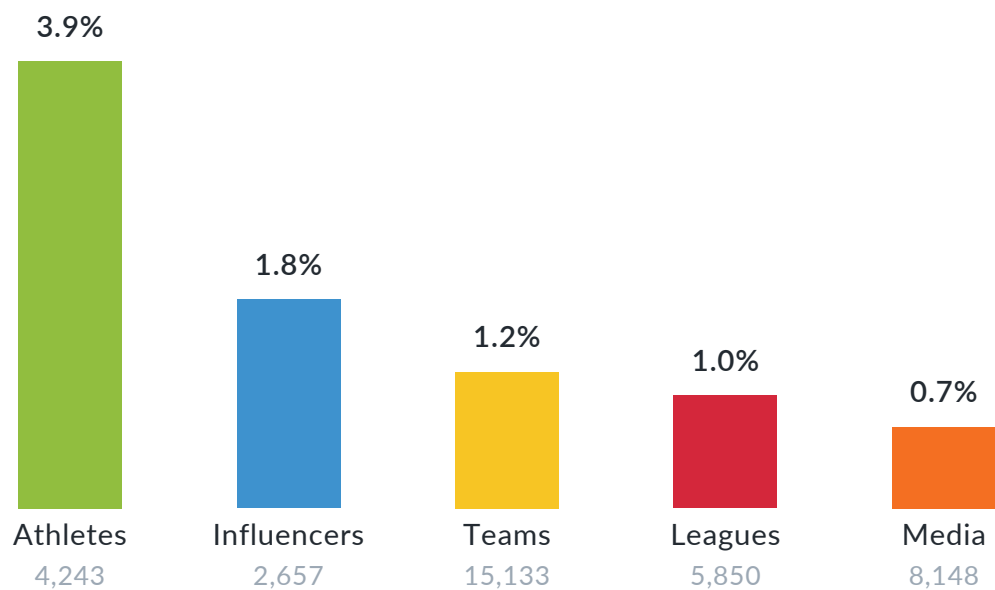
Opendorse analyzed more than 36,000 Instagram branded posts from athletes, influencers, teams, leagues, and media accounts.

Athletes outperformed all other account types by 3.3X

Engagement Rate

All Sponsors

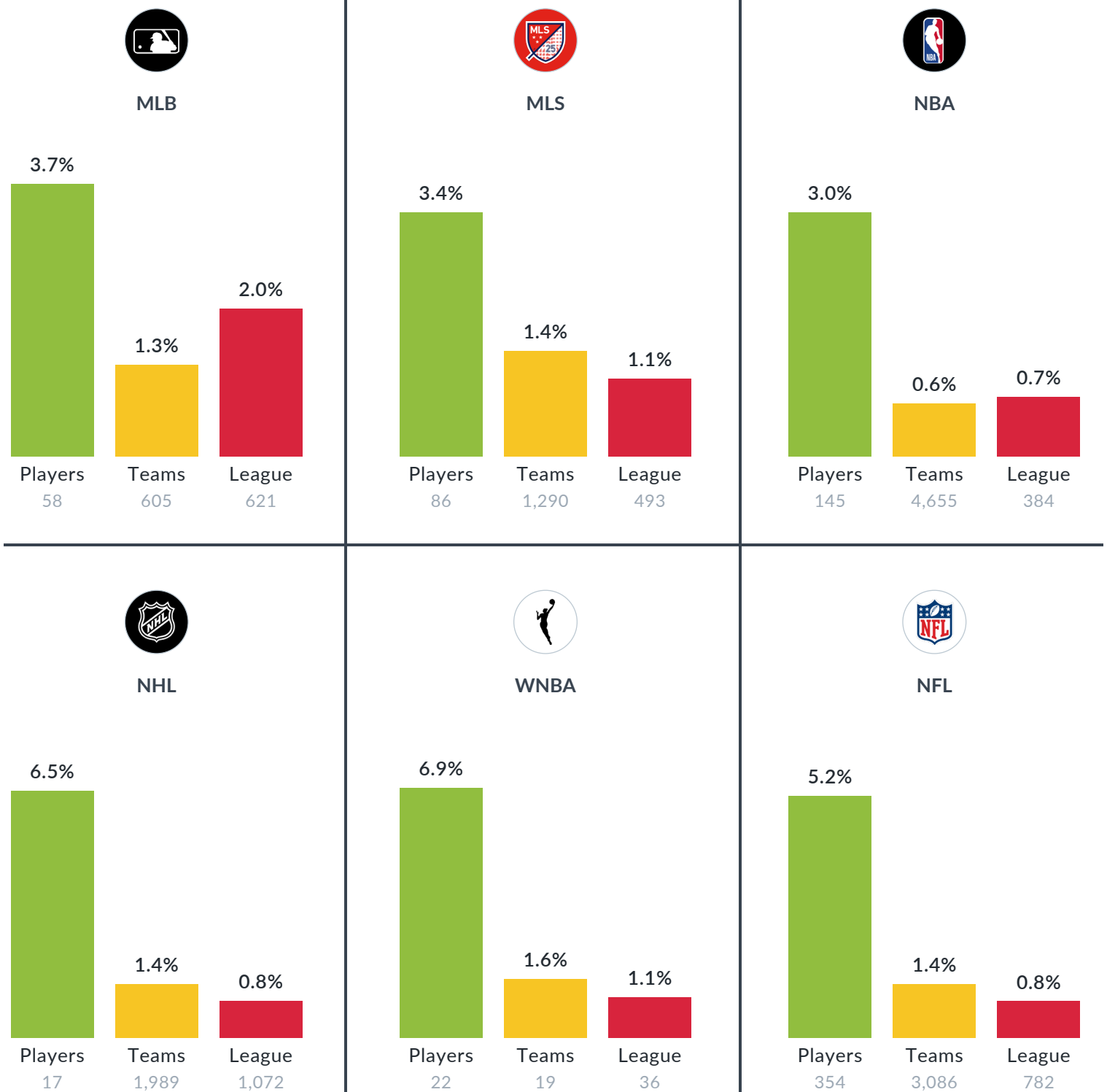
2019 INSTAGRAM BRANDED CONTENT



Engagement Rate by Account Type

Athletes Outperformed Their Teams and Leagues in Every Major Sport

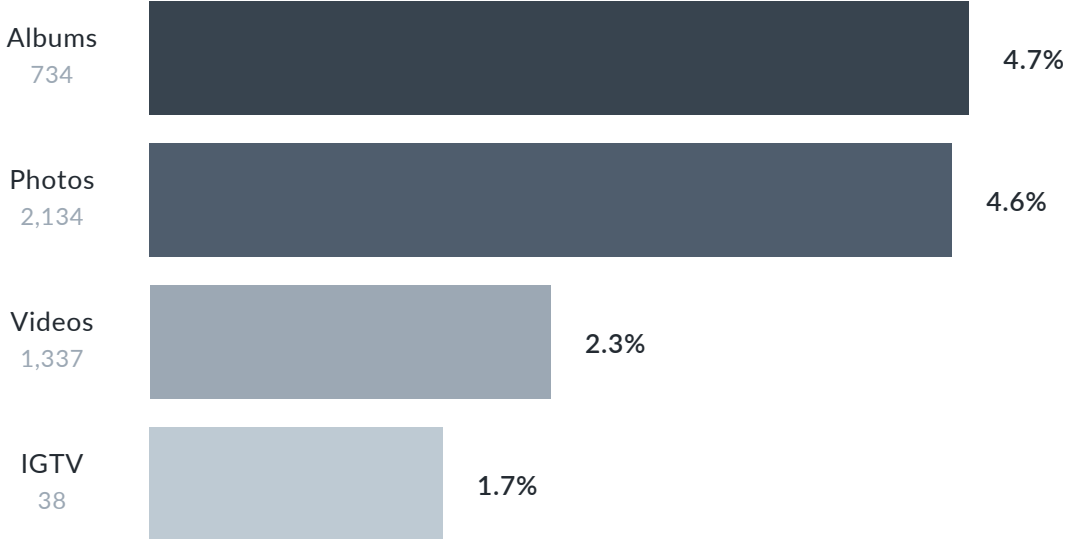
2019 INSTAGRAM BRANDED CONTENT ENGAGEMENT RATE



Albums and Photos Drove the Most Engagement For Sponsors

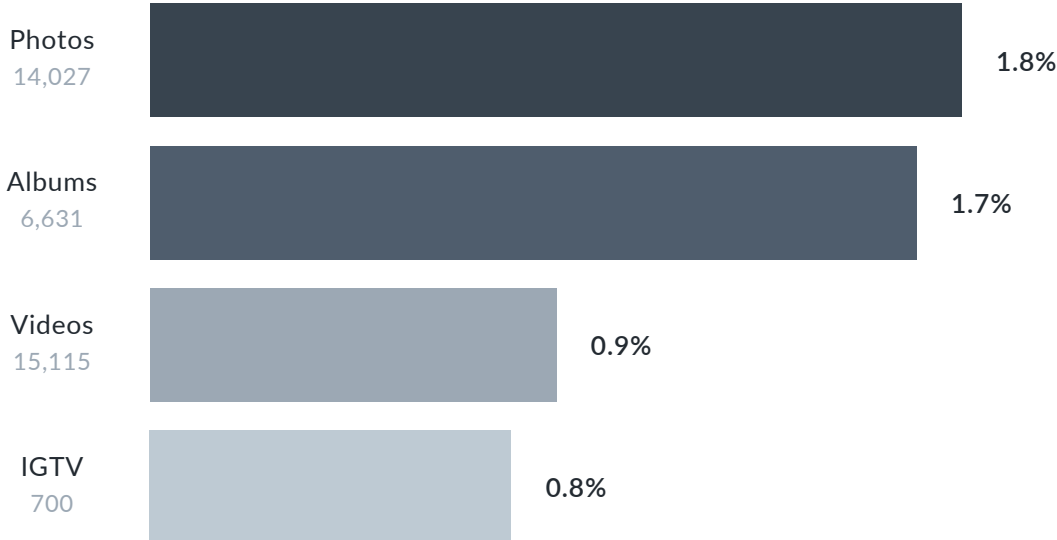
2019 INSTAGRAM BRANDED CONTENT ENGAGEMENT RATE

Athlete Accounts



Engagement Rate by Content Type

All Accounts



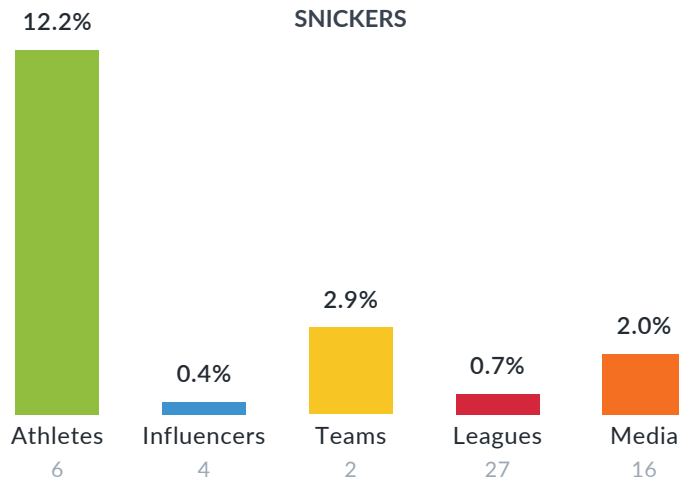
Engagement Rate by Content Type

Athlete Accounts Created More Engagement for Nearly Every Brand Surveyed

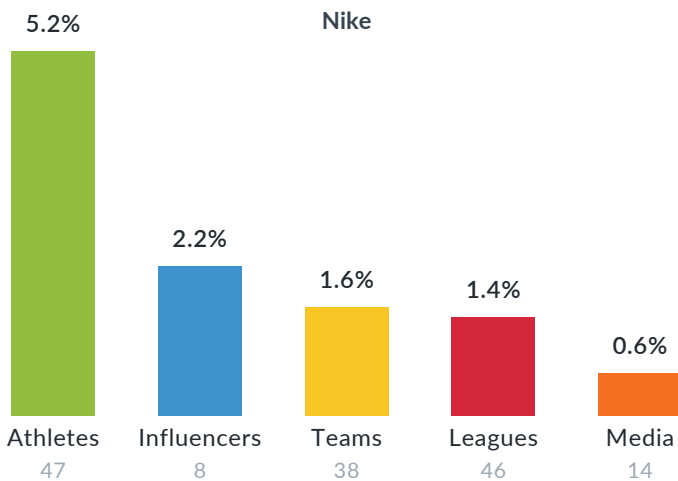
2019 INSTAGRAM BRANDED CONTENT ENGAGEMENT RATE



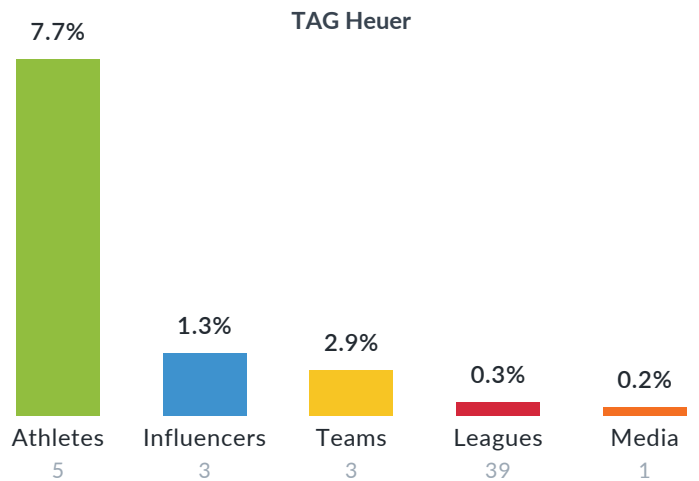
SNICKERS



Nike



TAG Heuer





SNICKERS

Athlete

26.5%

Influencer

0.6%

Team

3.4%

League

1.6%

Media

3.9%



BOSE

Athlete

21.7%

Influencer

1.2%

Team

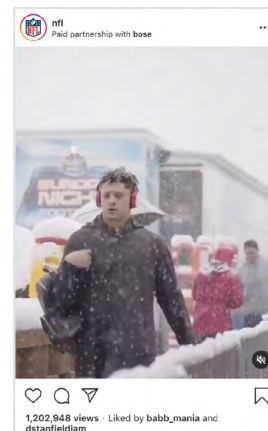
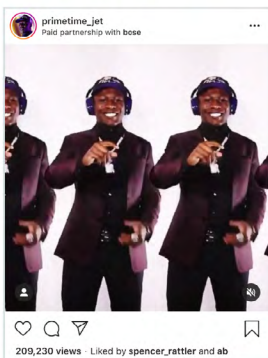
8.1%

League

1.7%

Media

0.7%



Access the Most Engaging Accounts in Sports

Athletes have proven to be the most influential individuals in sports sponsorship on social.

But even with 3.3X more effective engagement, they still receive fewer sponsored post opportunities than less impactful accounts at teams and leagues. We believe change is coming...soon. As athletes become more accessible and intentional about building their social media power, sponsors are sure to take notice.

We're here, fueling the shift:

Opendorse delivers thousands of athlete posts every month. Work with us to get one of the 20,000+ athletes on our platform to share your sponsored posts today.



opendorse