Title of dissertation thesis:

Sports Communication on Social Media: Analyzing the Facebook Content of Czech Professional Athletes and Audience Reactions

Name of student:

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Name of reviewer/opponent:

Doc. Peter Mikuláš, PhD.

At the very beginning, let me state that I consider the evaluated dissertation thesis to be a compact work that clearly meets the standards set for this type of scientific work. It deals with a topic that is very current and points to the new challenges that are currently being placed on media studies in the field of social media research. The doctoral student decided to implement an above-standard research project, which corresponds in quality and quantity of data to a smaller scientific project solved by several researchers. The work is well structured, pleasant to read, and demonstrates the excellent orientation of the doctoral student both in the main topic and in related ones. As an opponent, I clearly understood where the author was heading in both the theoretical and research parts. Even though the doctoral student focuses on professional athletes, I also perceive a certain prosocial impact of work, which has the potential of lesser-known athletes, resp. athletes performing lesser-known sports, to bring inspiration for their own presentation and promotion within the social media space. The language of the work is strictly scientific, the author bases her claims on quality sources, but clearly empowers them in the interpretive level. Some chapters of the theoretical work are even of quality at the level of prestigious scientific journal articles. As a non-native speaker, I did not find a single mistake in the quality of English. The formal level of work is also at a professional level.

The author has processed a large number of literary sources. She does not forget the basic works, but also reflects current journal sources. Work relies almost exclusively on foreign sources, but although to a relatively small extent, it also demonstrates continuity with the domestic workplace (eg D. Hejlová). In the future, I recommend doctoral student more intense use of domestic origin works, whether systematic (eg Světlík et al., 2017), but also those specifically focused on social media (especially the works of Jakub Macek). I also draw attention to the work of the Slovak author Peter Murár.

I have no critical remarks on the theoretical part of the work at the level of the given type of work. The doctoral student proceeds systematically, the individual parts follow each other well. I appreciate that she also deals with related topics (e.g., 1.3.2 The Disadvantages of Using Social Media), which testifies to the effort to provide a comprehensive social science insight into the issue.

The author implements a very extensive research project with implicitly positivist ambitions. I believe that during the obviously systematic work, she constantly discovered new dimensions of the issue. However, the work, which please do not consider a negative criticism, may open up more topics than are captured in its conclusions. If the doctoral student continues to work in the academic sphere, she has inspiration for years of research. It may have been appropriate to consider narrowing the topic, e.g. to what extent the given athletes are able to engage followers in their promotional communication. In a situation where social media are increasingly oversaturated with influencer marketing, the attention of practice and theory is no longer paid only to the quantitative side, but also

to the quality of influence. In this sense, it is interesting to pay attention to the so-called micro influencers, i.e. influencers with a smaller base of followers, but with more intensive contact with them, which results in a potentially more intense (promotional) influence. Against the background of specifically evaluated data, some of the analyzed athletes would probably fit into this idea better than others.

The author exemplary elaborated the methodological side of the research. Alternatively, she could also consider using standardized metrics. Especially sentiment analysis (eg. Kačányová and Bačíková, 2016) appears to be optimal in a similar type of research, especially in correspondence to the sentiment evoked by commercial posts of athletes, which would clearly refer to their use in marketing communication. However, the obtained data can be used in the future (also) for this type of research, which I strongly recommend to the doctoral student. Other interesting inspirations for future research are elaborated in the systematic publication by Světlík et al., 2017. At the same time, it must be said that the doctoral student at least touched on the issue of sentiment, and she presents the results in Figure 165. At first glance, the general results in this regard (applied to all posts) are clearly positive. However, it would be interesting to follow only commercially tuned posts in this direction.

The research part is extensive. In addition to social media monitoring (content analysis), the author also interviewed athletes or their representatives. The complexity of such a research design is at a high level and I believe that the author has done well. I appreciate that the coding was provided by two persons, which undoubtedly has an impact on the quality of the results, although, as the doctoral student states on p. 61, this process was challenging.

The author sets out several hypotheses, which are supported by quoted research. In this regard, a closer clarification of each of the hypotheses might be required, as the cited research also in principle contains limits (e.g. time distance, cultural context, representativeness of samples and research material, etc.) in relation to the specifics of the Czech environment and the researched period.

The hypotheses are not statistically verified, but this is related to the nature of the research design. Comparison of a relatively small group (10 athletes) is a necessary minimum in this context (although adequate processing was above standard demanding). The derivation of general results in this case, therefore, encounters methodological limits, which should undoubtedly have been elaborated in a separate part of the work and should have been addressed in a more targeted manner in the interpretation of the results, because they had to have a significant effect. (For the sake of correctness, it should be noted that the author formulated the limits of the work in the Conclusion and in the Summary).

Most of the hypotheses (H1, H3, H4, H6, H8, H9) were only partially confirmed, which is related to a small research group, within which individual variations have fully manifested. While partial verification of the hypothesis is not standard in quantitative research, in mixed (and thus in this case) it is acceptable, although certainly not optimal.

I see certain limits of work in dealing with the term of attractiveness. Although this term is frequently used in the research part, in the theoretical part the author deals with it only briefly (p. 38), where she states: „While popularity can be measured by the number of people who "like" an athlete's page, attractiveness can be measured by the number of people who "follow" the page." She works with this idea further in the research part. However, I am afraid that this approach is quite reductionist. The author could / should have clearly explained this fact. From the point of view of social psychology, the issue of personality attractiveness is a broad topic, which is duly reflected in celebrity studies, with which the topic of the dissertation clearly corresponds (see Source attractiveness Model by McGuire

from the '80s). I was also surprised by the operationalization of the term "fans" in the research part. The author proceeds by referring to the number of identified "likes" as the number of "fans", other times she only talks about "likes". However, I do not consider such a procedure to be completely correct and I ask the doctoral student to explain it during the defence of the thesis. Of course, in the case of social media analysis, it is possible to proceed in such a way that each subscriber of the fan page will be marked as a fan, which, however, is not the topic of the evaluated work as it deals only with Facebook pages. However, if we are to distinguish Facebook pages fans from followers, we encounter a fundamental problem. I am afraid that being a fan is not a quantitative trait that can be assessed on the basis of a reaction, but a more complex phenomenon on an individual level. By analogy, I believe that the titles of the „Fans´ reactions" chapters, relating to each of the athletes analyzed, are not chosen appropriately. The situation is also problematic by the fact that interactions with the athlete are not limited by followers, as together they are public pages that can be displayed to a much wider group of people based on Facebook algorithms. There is clearly a categorically broader term of the audience that could be used, which I find in the work, but relatively little, in connection with the research part, more or less only in the wording of hypothesis H8.

Let me also make a note on the formulation of research questions. These are primarily linked to the results of content analysis, their formulation in the case of structured interviews is less targeted. This fact was subsequently reflected in the hypotheses, which are verified almost only by the results of content analysis. I believe that the structured interviews, which are an extremely valuable source of data, could be interpreted more than the author presents.

The doctoral student does not follow the recommendations for the theory of media studies and/or for practice. Although I find certain implicit elements in the work, due to the clearly above-standard research, it was appropriate to include a separate section devoted to this issue.

I ask that my critical remarks be understood as constructive and in no way devaluing unequivocally above-standard quality work. I believe that the author will continue her research intentions because she fills a significant gap in this area of research. I also think that the work is potentially useful not only for academia but also for the practice of media and marketing communication.

Questions for the discussion:

1. A very interesting category of research is self-branding, which is almost neglected in marketing communication, although its fundamental role is evident. To what extent did this category overlap with other categories? In particular, I am thinking of the category of Without promotion.
2. The author does not elaborate on the segmentation of products/brands promoted by the researched athletes, which is understandable in terms of the already above-average scope of work. However, I assume that the doctoral student also dealt with this topic, as it is indicated in Figure 162, where she lists brands promoted by athletes. Therefore, I ask the doctoral student to present at least rough features of product segmentation, as well as to explain, whether athletes were more often in the role of experts (promoting brands from "their" field) or celebrity endorsers (promoting brands with which their profession has nothing to do). Were there significant differences between men and women in this regard?
3. Did the author consider a service providing social media monitoring? Such data could shed light on the deeper contexts of the presence of the analyzed athletes, not only in the scope of their own pages but also in the wider area of social media.

I highly recommend the dissertation thesis of Mgr. Kateřina Turková for final defence.

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