

Taekwondo championship participant's social networking sites usage profile: a descriptive study

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Published online: July 31, 2022

(Accepted for publication July 15, 2022)

DOI:10.7752/jpes.2022.07216

Abstract:

The use of social media within the sports sector is increasingly gaining importance. *Purpose:* Therefore, the main aim of this article is to show the different motivations and perceptions of the usage of social networking sites, as well as the used types of social networking sites relating to a sports event. *Approach:* A twofold methodology was carried out. First, a descriptive study, resulting from a survey carried out at the Spanish Taekwondo Clubs' Championship 2021, was performed. Secondly, the posts of the official social media sites of the Spanish Taekwondo Federation were analysed and the engagement was calculated. *Results:* This work, based on qualitative information of the participants of the beforehand mentioned championship, reveals the different areas of the use of social networking sites regarding the event and its destination from a sports touristic and marketing communication perspective. Findings indicate an elevated usage for interaction with other participants and information seeking about the event and activities, and well-created expectations and perceived images on social networking sites. Nevertheless, those platforms mainly did not affect the decision on whether to assist in the championship. Posts with visual support on Facebook and Twitter obtained more interaction, with Facebook being the one with the highest engagement. *Conclusions:* Social networking sites were used for a wide range of motivations, which were mainly based on the importance of social networking sites as an information source, for social interaction and interpersonal communication exchange. The results of this study help explain the motivations and perceptions of the usage of social networking sites before, during and after a sports event and allow the understanding of their influence on the participants.

Key Words: sports tourism, sports event, social media, online marketing

Introduction

Study background: Taekwondo

Taekwondo is a martial art that originated in Korea and appeared as a demonstration sport in the Olympic Games in Seoul, South Korea in 1988 and again in 1992 in the Olympic Games in Barcelona, Spain. Finally, it became an official medal sport at the Olympic Games in Sydney, Australia in 2000. It is a sport that not only is a global elite sport but also still focuses on the values of an ancient Asian heritage.

There are two great federations of taekwondo. On the one hand, there is "World Taekwondo" (WT), formerly called "World Taekwondo Federation", which is a member of the Association of Summer Olympic International Federations (ASOIF) as well as the International Paralympic Committee (IPC) and has the Korean "Kukkiwon" as an educational headquarter and the other hand there is the International "Taekwon-Do Federation" (ITF).

Research in the field of taekwondo has mainly focused on injuries (Berengüi Gil et al., 2011; Lystad et al., 2009), physical or psychological attributes (Bridge et al., 2014; Fachrezzy et al., 2021) and technical or tactical approaches (González de Prado et al., 2011; López-López et al., 2015). Only very few studies focused on different aspects, such as event quality, perceptions and consumer satisfaction (Ko et al., 2010; Ko et al., 2014).

The taekwondo championship analysed in this study belongs to the WT. The Spanish Taekwondo Clubs' Championship is an annual event which takes place in different Spanish host cities. The participation was available for all age categories, including children, cadets, juniors, seniors, and veterans. Also, there are competitions in all style categories, except in para taekwondo: combat, poomsae, freestyle and exhibition.

The Spanish Taekwondo Federation announced the championship on their social networking sites (SNS) and broadcasted on their YouTube channel all combats and patterns via live stream. The used SNS were Facebook (Real Federación Española y D.A.) and Twitter (R.F.E.T. Taekwondo) with both including backlinks to the live streams on YouTube and the YouTube channel itself (Real Federación Española de Taekwondo) with a live stream and a playlist called CTO ESPAÑA CLUBS 2021.

Literature review of sports tourism and social media

Sports events and championships are an essential part of sports tourism and they have experienced a great boom in recent years, not only in the field of sports but also as a tourist attraction. They are not only an

additional attraction for tourists, but also, they can help to diversify a mature destination or offer new opportunities for emerging destinations (Rangel and Rivero, 2018). The perception of a destination and the sports tourist's satisfaction showed to have a great influence in the future intentions of attending a sports event (Vegara-Ferri et al., 2018). Thus, for sports event organizers and marketers, it is very important to understand why spectators and athletes attend an event to obtain sustainable growth by repeaters. It is also very important for them to understand which kind of people are attracted to their events and consequentially market the event appropriately (Getz and McConnell, 2011). In the same way, sports event organizers need to know the preferences of consumers regarding the event's social media presence, if, how and to what extent they use them and what purposes they serve.

Weed and Bull (2009) define several types of sport tourism, including, such as active participation, sports event tourism and sports training tourism. Thus, as well as other sports tourists, taekwondo athletes, trainers, referees, and spectators when travelling to participate in a championship, tournament or training camps can be considered tourists. Social networking sites are one of the most popular social media platforms nowadays. Especially in the tourism sector, there is a growing importance of social media for travel-related information search (Xiang and Gretzel, 2010). The uses and gratifications theory can be applied to social media and more specifically also on social networking sites (SNS), as consumers use SNS in order to obtain different uses and gratifications. Whiting and Williams (2013) found the following ten uses and gratifications according to why people use social media: social interaction, information seeking, pass time, entertainment, relaxation, communicatory utility, convenience utility, opinion expression, sharing of information, and knowledge about other people. These findings are very similar to an earlier study by Brandtzæg and Heim (2009) on the same topic. The same authors identified five different user types among Norwegian SNS. These are sporadics, lurkers, socialisers, debaters and actives (Brandtzaeg and Heim, 2011).

Organizations of nearly every sector use social media for communication and interaction purposes, and communities in SNS influence supporting brand reputation and brand engagement (Kaur et al., 2016; Pletikosa Cvijikj and Michahelles, 2013). The awareness of the importance of engagement with the customer is constantly growing. The concept of engagement within the field of social media has been analysed by studies such as those of García-Fernández et al. (2017), Pletikosa Cvijikj and Michahelles (2013) and Vale and Fernandes (2018). Ineson and Anderson (2016) confirmed a strong correlation between a high social media presence and an increase of fans of an organisation.

It is not only important to understand why people use social media, but also knowing the socio-demographic profiles is crucial for organizations, especially in the tourism sector, as consumers are international. In the events sector, e.g., in sports events, demographic variables are important as different niche markets may be the focus depending on the marketing strategies that need to be applied. Demographic variables influence in the explanation of demand and event preferences (Tassiopoulos et al., 2010). Moreover, the identification of athletes' profiles can help to recognize relevant aspects to better promote and market a certain sport (Dorado et al., 2022). Perceived value on SNS, the search for additional information and interaction and electronic word of mouth was found as impact factors within social media usage at a sports event (Einsle and Escalera-Izquierdo, 2022).

Social media usage in the field of taekwondo barely has been studied but it was discovered that taekwondo specific social media is used for information seeking, entertainment and relationship building with other taekwondo fans (Cha et al., 2017). As Ko et al. (2014) already stated, future research in the taekwondo events area needs to study the usage of social media as it is one of the fastest-growing marketing tools nowadays. Hence, there is a need to understand and study in more detail the sports touristic profile and the use of SNS within a sports tourism event, like the Spanish Taekwondo Clubs' Championship.

Material & methods

The main purpose of this paper was to analyse the SNS consumer usage profile at the Spanish Taekwondo Clubs' Championship to advance the knowledge of the manner of social media use. In this way, there will be given an insight into the individuals' incentives that drive taekwondo tourists to use SNS.

In contemplation of achieving this objective, the present study was elaborated on a twofold methodology. It was based on empirical research, using a non-experimental methodology. A descriptive research method was therefore adopted. The main part of this study is comprised of the analysis of a survey among the participants of the Spanish Taekwondo Clubs' Championship 2021. This analysis begins with the sociodemographic and sports touristic profile of the respondents and then details their event-related social media behaviour. The second part consists of a descriptive analysis of the Spanish Taekwondo Federations' posts on their SNS. Therefore, the posts on the platforms Facebook, Twitter and YouTube were analysed.

Sample

The sample was composed of athletes, trainers, volunteers, and spectators of the Spanish taekwondo clubs' championship held in Benidorm, Spain from 4th to 7th December 2021. The survey participation was limited to adults from 16 years or older. All persons who took part in the study, participated voluntarily, being informed, and having agreed to the confidential treatment of their answers, which are subject to the guarantees of

the Spanish Law: Ley Orgánica 3/2018, of December 5, 2018, on Personal Data Protection and the guarantee of digital rights.

The survey was held as well in situ as online by providing a Google forms questionnaire. To obtain qualitative data, as an exclusion criterion a control question was included, and the age of the participants was controlled. The questionnaire included a part of sociodemographic questions, and another part was composed of items regarding the usage of social networks. The format of the scale was a 7-point Likert-type scale (from 1 = totally disagree to 7 = totally agree). Overall, 35 participants successfully completed the questionnaire.

On the other hand, the three official social media accounts of the Spanish Taekwondo Federation were analysed concerning the likes, shares, comments, and views of posts related to the championship. The analysed SNS were Facebook, Twitter and Youtube. There exists also an Instagram account on the Spanish Taekwondo Federation, but there has not been any actualization since the 1st of January 2021. Therefore, and as there was no post about the Spanish Taekwondo Clubs' Championship on this account, it was not taken into consideration. These data have been collected between the 21st and 22nd of March 2022.

Procedure

The data analysis was based on descriptive statistical analysis, which was obtained using the statistical programme IBM SPSS version 27.0.1.

The answers to the questionnaire as well as the data obtained by the generated posts on SNS were analysed according to the characteristics and distribution of the different variables. For this purpose, frequencies, mean values (M), standard deviation (SD), maximum and minimum values, median (Mdn), and quartile deviation (QD) were calculated. The intention to revisit the taekwondo clubs' championship was recoded from a variable with seven categories into a dummy variable. Scores from 1 to 4 were considered as no intention to revisit and scores from 5 to 7 as an intention to revisit. It was considered that only the respondents who answered at least a score of "agree" (5) have a real intention to revisit the championship, thus respondents who scored "neutral" (4) were included in no intention to revisit.

Regarding the usage of social networks, first, it was asked which social networks were generally used by the interviewed persons. After that, there were three blocks of items, the first one about information seeking in SNS, the second one about expectation and image in SNS and the last one about SNS usage for interaction and entertainment. In these last three sections, there were series of individual questions with Likert-type response options. These individual items were not grouped into sets of fewer variables or a "survey scale" (Sullivan and Artino, 2013). Accordingly, as well as those response categories have a rank order from 1 = totally disagree to 7 = totally agree, they fall within the ordinal level of measurement and thus, frequencies, median and interquartile range were calculated.

Concerning the posts on SNS, the overall number of posts per platform as well as the number of likes, comments, shares, retweets, and views were analysed, compared, and discussed. Also, the overall engagement was calculated. Therefore, first, an observation sheet was used, to gather the key information of the different posts. To determine, the value of the engagement, mathematical formula based on the user actions on the posts of the three different SNS were calculated. Therefore, we used the formula provided by García-Fernández et al. (2017), who adapted the original formula of Ángeles Oviedo-García et al. (2014) as it had some limitations and also, they adapted it for the use with Twitter, providing the following formulas:

Engagement on Facebook = (Likes + Comments + Shares)/Number of Posts

Engagement on Twitter = (Favourites + Mentions + Retweets)/Number of Tweets

As we also used YouTube in our study, thus, we adapted the formula for use with YouTube:

Engagement on YouTube = (Likes + Dislikes + Comments)/Number of Videos

Results

The implementation of the prior designed questionnaire within the framework of this research has allowed getting a broader vision of the uses and perceptions of SNS of the participants of the Spanish Taekwondo Clubs' Championship. The results of the survey as well as of the analysed SNS are presented in the following. The average age was 32,63 years (+ 13,095) with a range from 16 to 62 years. More than half of the interviewed persons were female (54,3 %). 97,1 % had Spanish nationality and 2,9 % German nationality. The respondents came from 9 different Spanish autonomous communities. On average they travelled 468,05 km (+ 308,81) to assist the event.

The majority were single (65,7 %) followed by married (31,4 %). Concerning the educational level, nearly a third of the respondents had a university degree (31,4 %) followed by a GCSE/ A-levels (28,6 %) and secondary education (22,9 %). 60 % were either employees or self-employed, whereas the resting 40 % were students. Regarding the sports touristic profile of the respondents, 37,1 % were trainers, 31,4 % athletes, 17,1 % spectators, 11,4 % referees and 2,9 % volunteers. More than half of them confirmed practising physical activity for more than 5 hours a week (51,4 %) and 34,3 % between 3 and 5 hours a week. Nearly three quarter (71,7 %) participated in the category of kyorugi (combat), followed by poomsae (patterns) with 15,2 %. More than half of the respondents (54,3%) were accompanied by 10 or more persons. 94,3 % of the no residents in Benidorm stayed overnight in Benidorm, either in hotels (51,5 %) or in apartments (48,5 %). 88,6% realised other activities apart from assisting in the championship. More than half of the respondents (56,8%) indicated that they visited a

restaurant, followed by 20,5% who did other leisure activities and 6,80% realised other sports activities during their stay in Benidorm. Finally, 91,4% indicated that they have the intention to revisit the championship.

Table 1. Sociodemographic characteristics and sport touristic profile

Sociodemographic characteristics		
<i>Age</i>		32,63 (\pm 13,095)
<i>Gender</i>	Men	45,70%
	Women	54,30%
<i>Nationality</i>	Spanish	97,10%
	German	2,90%
<i>Civil status</i>	Married	31,40%
	Single	65,70%
	Divorced	2,90%
<i>Educational level</i>	Primary	8,60%
	Secondary	22,90%
	GCSE level	28,60%
	University degree	31,40%
<i>Employment status</i>	PhD	8,60%
	Student	40,00%
	Employee	40,00%
	Freelance/self employed	20,00%
Sport touristic profile		
<i>Type of participation</i>	Athlete	31,40%
	Spectator	17,10%
	Trainer	37,10%
	Referee	11,40%
	Volunteer/ part of organization	2,90%
<i>Participation category</i>	Combat	71,70%
	Poomsae	15,20%
	Freestyle	10,90%
	Exhibition	2,20%
<i>Physical activity</i>	Never	2,90%
	Between 1 and 3 hours per week	11,40%
	Between 3 and 5 hours per week	34,30%
	More than 5 hours per week	51,40%
<i>Overnight stay in Benidorm by no residents</i>	Yes	94,30%
	No	5,70%
<i>Type of accommodation</i>	Hotel	51,50%
	Apartment	48,50%
<i>Other activities</i>	No other activities	14,30%
	Restaurant visit	71,40%
	Other sport activities	8,60%
	Leisure activities	25,70%
	Cultural activities	5,70%
<i>Accompanying persons</i>	0	2,90%
	1	5,70%
	2	14,30%
	3	2,90%
	4	2,90%
	5	2,90%
	6	5,70%
	7	5,70%
	9	2,90%
	10	8,60%
	More than 10	45,70%

About one-third of the respondents knew about the event from friends or family, followed by WOM (22,96%). Only 2,86% knew about it from publicity. It must be highlighted that 20% knew about the event from Facebook. Nevertheless, nobody indicated becoming aware of the championship by other SNS like Instagram or Twitter (fig. 1).

The results of the most used SNS are shown in figure 2. The most used social network with 94,3 % was WhatsApp, followed by Instagram (91,4 %), Facebook (74,3 %), YouTube (68,6 %) and TikTok (40,0 %). Overall, the participants indicated the use of 10 different kinds of SNS.

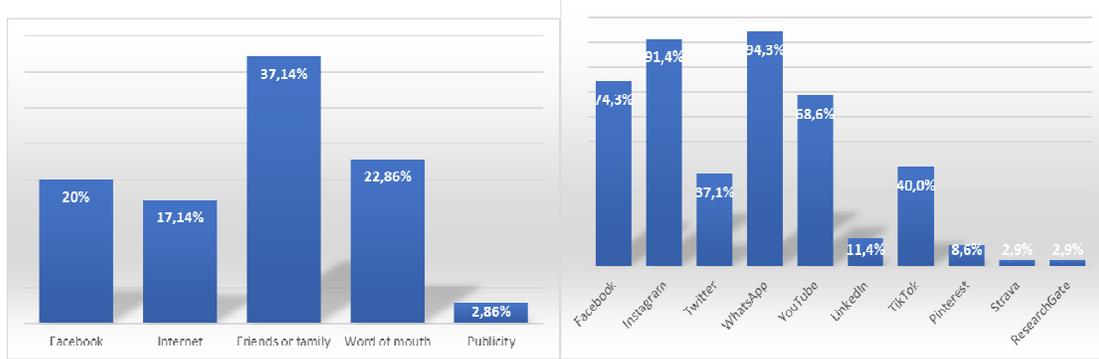


Fig. 1. Knowledge about the event

Fig. 1. Most used social networking sites

Considering the use of SNS as a source of information for the participants of the championship, the results are shown in figure 3.

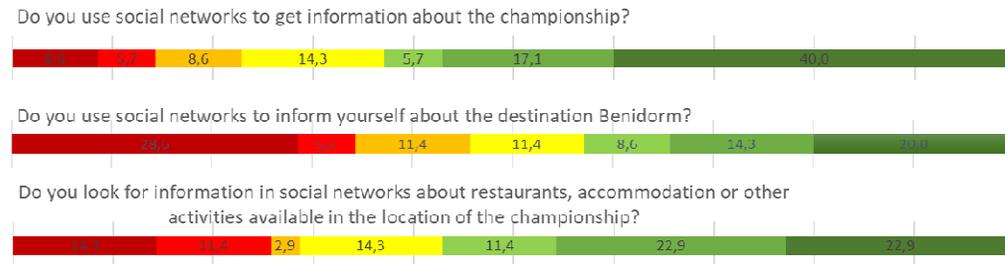


Fig 3. Use of SNS for information seeking

Over 60 % of the participants agreed to have used SNS to inform themselves about the championship (Mdn = 6; QD = 1,5) and over 55 % in having searched for information about complementary offers in the location of the championship, such as restaurants, accommodation, or other cultural, leisure or sports activities (Mdn = 5,50; QD = 1,5). Whereas the usage of SNS to search for information about the destination Benidorm was moderate (Mdn = 4; QD= 2,5) with nearly one-third (28,6 %) who did not look up information about the destination itself at all.

Of those who used SNS to inform themselves about news about the championship, over one-third (35,5%) indicated accessing SNS sites several times a day and another 29% did so on a daily basis. The resting 35,5% accessed weekly (fig.4).

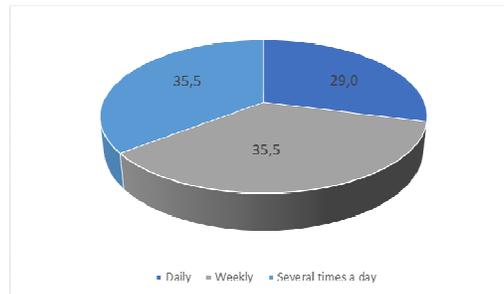


Fig.4 Frequencies of information seeking about the event

88,6 % of the participants agreed that SNS created a good impression of the championship (Mdn = 6; QD = 1) and more than 80 % that the expectation of the championship that had been created in SNS has been fulfilled (Mdn = 6; QD = 1). By contrast, the expectations of the destination created by SNS were not that highly rated, but still fulfilled by the majority with around two-thirds of the respondents agreeing (Mdn = 5; QD = 1). Nevertheless, the fact that the event had been present in SNS did not affect the participants' decision to attend or participate in the tournament (Mdn = 1; QD = 1,5). 60 % of the respondents indicated that it did absolutely not affect their decision (figure 5).

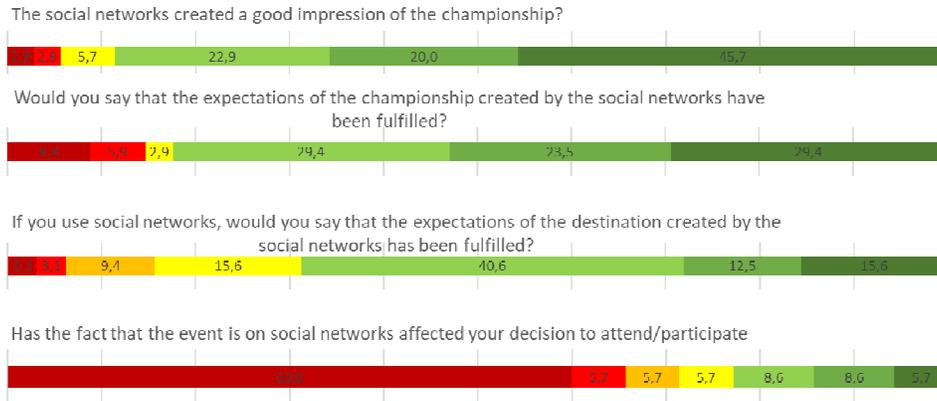


Fig.5. Images obtained and satisfied expectations in social media

Regarding the usage of SNS for interaction and entertainment, the results are presented in figure 6. Almost three-quarters of the respondents agreed to have posted in SNS about their participation or attendance in the championship (Mdn = 7; QD = 1,5) and even more (77,2 %) stated that SNS were helpful to interact with other participants of the championship (Mdn = 6,5; QD = 1). Also, a great amount (62,9 %) agreed to have used SNS to promote their participation or to motivate others to attend the championship (Mdn = 6; QD = 2). Additionally, more than two-thirds of the respondents agreed to have searched and established “friend requests” with other participants or having “followed” other participants (Mdn = 6; QD = 2,5). The usage of SNS during the championship as an entertainment tool was moderate with around half of the participants have used it for those reasons (Mdn = 5; QD = 2).

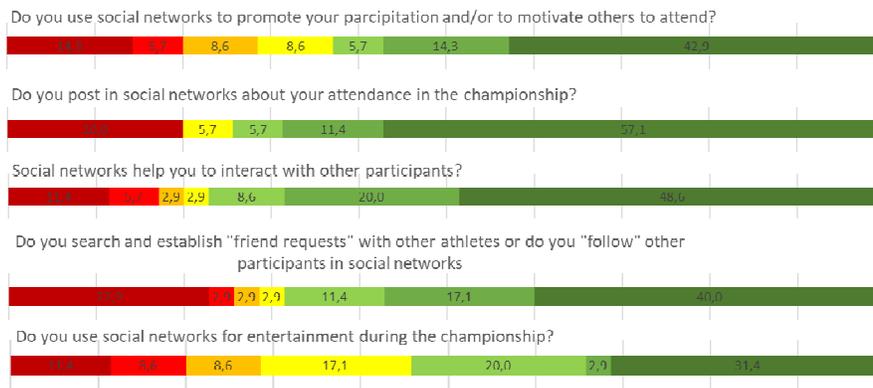


Fig. 6. Interaction and entertainment

Concerning the posts published on the SNS of the Spanish Taekwondo Federation, the results can be seen in table 2.

On Facebook, there were 16 posts about the championship published on the official account, with the first one on the 19th of March 2021 and the last one on the 10th of December 2021. The first one that announced the championship with a photo, was also the most commented and shared one. Whereas the last one, a video summary of the championship was the most liked and the one with the second most comments and shares. Four publications included videos and five contained photos. The rest were based on links.

Those posts including videos or photos had on average more likes and shares than those posts only containing links. Overall, the posts about the championship had 1578 likes (M=98,63; SD=65,097), 28 comments (M=1,75; SD=1,732) and 391 shares (M=24,44; SD=28,277).

In Twitter, there were only 6 tweets about the championship, with a total of 142 likes (M=23,67; SD=22,914), one comment (M=0,17; SD=0,408) and 36 retweets (M=6; SD1,789). These tweets were all posted between the 1st and the 8th of December 2021, being the most liked tweet with 62 likes, the last one which was posted, a retweet of Adriana Cerezo Iglesias’ (silver medal winner in the Tokyo Olympic Games 2020) post about the championship.

On YouTube, there was an overall of 56 videos with 157785 views (M=2817,59; SD=2049,528), including 46 live stream videos and 10 other videos not posted live. There was a total of 726 likes (M=12,96; SD=9,567) and 15 comments (M=0,27; SD=0,774). A video summary of the championship was the most viewed and most liked video, whereas the most commented with 4 comments was a live stream from the athletes’

category “Cadets and Sub21”. It has to be mentioned that three of these comments were made due to missing combats in the end. The fourth comment was the answer of the account manager of the channel. Considering the engagement, the highest value was found on Facebook, followed by Twitter and lastly on YouTube. Both, Twitter, and YouTube had a rather low engagement in comparison with Facebook. Although the number of views on YouTube was relatively high, interaction and engagement were low.

Table 2. Comparative statistics of target study variables according to official SNS posts

	Total	Min	Max	M	SD	Engagement
Facebook (N=16)						124,81
Likes	1578	19	189	98,63	65,097	
Comments	28	0	6	1,75	1,732	
Shares	391	3	116	24,44	28,277	
Twitter (N=6)						29,83
Favourites	142	6	62	23,67	22,914	
Comments	1	0	1	0,17	0,408	
Retweets	36	4	9	6	1,789	
YouTube (N=56)						13,23
Views	157785	255	9918	2817,59	2049,528	
Likes	726	1	62	12,96	9,567	
Comments	15	0	4	0,27	0,774	

Discussion

The beforehand presented results of the present study provide descriptive data for the motivations and perceptions of SNS usage in the field of sports tourism and allow a detailed analysis of the habits of SNS usage among the participants of the Spanish Taekwondo Clubs' Championship. The paper provides an insight into how athletes perceive and value social network usage before, during and after the main competition either as active participants or as spectators.

The most used social networks among the participants of the championship were WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube which are globally also the most popular social networks, but in a different order. The worldwide rank order is Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp, and Instagram (Statista, 2022).

Information seeking in SNS turned out to be important concerning the championship and regarding other activities. Nevertheless, it was just moderate for destination information seeking. In the SNS of the Spanish Taekwondo Federation, there was also no mention of destination relevant information.

The image participants got about the championship in SNS was overall rated as very good and the expectations that were created in SNS about the event were mainly fulfilled. Likewise, the expectations created in SNS about the destination were in large part fulfilled, but not to the same extent as the ones about the championship. The championship's SNS presence had no great effect on attendance or participation decisions.

Interaction on SNS showed to be an important aspect for the participants. Most of the respondents posted on SNS about their participation, motivated others to assist in the championship, interacted with other participants on SNS or established friend requests with others. SNS as a mere entertainment tool during the championship was rather moderate.

Overall, it could be seen that in general the participants of the Spanish Taekwondo Clubs' Championship used social media and SNS for a broad range of motivations. The findings go along with other studies in this field. SNS were mainly used as an important source for information seeking (Xiang and Gretzel, 2010) and for social interaction and interpersonal communication exchange (Brandtzæg and Heim, 2009). Even though, they did not affect the decision to participate.

Regarding the posts made by the Spanish Taekwondo Federation, it has been seen that those posts on Facebook and Twitter including visual support like photos or videos were more liked and shared than others which only included links. This coincides with the results of Huertas et al. (2015). Nevertheless, Youtube had a low engagement value, whereas engagement on Facebook resulted the highest.

Practical implications of this research include some guidelines that could be followed by the social media manager of sports events or national sports federations. Organizations, such as the Spanish Taekwondo Federation or other national or regional sports federations should be managed as brands (Avila Escobar, 2018). Unless they are major sports, most of them only receive low media coverage and have small marketing budgets. Nevertheless, national sports federations can benefit from social media use as a communication and marketing tool to adjust to the demands of the actual sports industry (Avila Escobar, 2018; Eagleman, 2013).

As it is known that marketing and promotion of brands through social media have the potential to improve the performance of an organization (Kasemsap, 2016), in the case of the Spanish Taekwondo Federation, it would be advisable to focus on a more balanced social media strategy.

The strategy followed on Facebook is basically well-adjusted, insofar as 20% of the respondents got to know the event via Facebook and within the analysed SNS it has the highest mean of likes, comments and shares per post. Moreover, Facebook is the third most used SNS among the respondents.

On the other hand, the social media strategy could focus more on Instagram and restart a SNS strategy on this platform, as it is the second most used SNS after WhatsApp among the respondents. Retweets and comments on Twitter posts are rare, thus tweets should be better elaborated and should focus on the target audience.

Conclusions

The present study has allowed to identify the motivations for the usage of SNS before, during and after the Spanish Taekwondo Clubs' Championship. The results indicated that the participants generally used social media for a wide range of motivations. Mainly those were based on the importance of SNS as a source for information seeking, for social interaction and interpersonal communication exchange. Nevertheless, SNS could not be identified as an indicator for the decision to participate in the championship.

Visual support on Facebook and Twitter was identified as an important tool for interaction. Facebook was the SNS with the highest engagement rate, whereas YouTube showed a low engagement. Regarding the obtained results, some practical implications for social media managers, like the reinforcement of the social media strategies, were highlighted. Some limitations are acknowledged in the present paper. The sample size was rather small, and the data collection was made only at one taekwondo championship on a national level. Thus, the results cannot be extrapolated to the general population. Therefore, for future investigations it would be interesting to broaden the sample size, which would help to extrapolate the obtained results. On the other hand, future research could focus on an international championship to examine if there are differences in the perception between different nationalities.

Conflicts of interest The authors declare no conflicts of interests.

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