

Creation of a Team Brand with Individual Athletes on Social Media:

An Exploratory Case Study of the FAB_IV

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Abstract

The purpose of this research was to understand the creation of a brand composed of four individual elite athletes and how stakeholders involved used social media to co-create the brand. The study examined the unique context of the FAB_IV; four individuals divers branded as a team.

Semi-structured interviews were performed with participants from Diving Canada, its athletes, member of the COC and sponsors. The sample was built through a purposeful and snowball sampling method that added to stakeholders identified from the literature. Archival data of organizational documents, FAB_IV microsite, social media accounts, news outlet content and online content were also gathered in order to complement the data from the interviews. The deductive and inductive data analysis highlighted four main themes: brand strategies and implementation - sponsorship and sponsorship activation - media and fan interest - stakeholder's relationship. Specifically regarding social media, the research showed that in order to use social media as a brand co-creation tool, organizations and athletes need to have a strategy in place, use them with consistency and be creative in what they publish. Additionally, fostering relationships with followers was identified as a key contributor of building a brand on social media.

Researchers and future researches should focus on organizations who, along with their stakeholders, are using social media as the main tool to co-create their brand. Moreover, having the fan or follower perspective, when doing a research pertaining to brand and value co-creation on social media, would also be a possible avenue for future researches.

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Introduction

Nowadays, athletes are more than product endorsers, they are cultural products that can be sold as brands (Gilchrist, 2005). There are various ways in which fans can consume athlete brands such as the recent technological advancements in social media. Social media fosters audience connection to a sports brand (Abeza, O'Reilly, Reid, 2013) and allows athletes to reach fans in a more personalized way than mass media would (Simmons, 2007). However, because of injuries and (negative) performance results, athletes can be seen as unstable brands which, according to Rein, Kothler & Shields (2006) can be overcome by using new ways of brand thinking. Moreover, according to Parmentier and Fisher (2012), athletes can significantly expand end-consumer awareness by affiliating themselves with other public figures who already have attracted mainstream media attention, or who are poised to do so. By examining the FAB_IV, a brand made of four Canadian Olympic divers, this research intended to contribute to the understanding of the notion of athletes as brands or sub-brands. It is expected, this case study will also be useful by contributing to the theory on value and brand co-creation in a sport environment, where a subbrand was co-created with four athletes, who compete individually and in duos, and their stakeholders.

Leading up to the Olympic Games in Rio 2016, Diving Canada has teamed four of its woman medal hopeful into one marketing package : The FAB_IV. While athletes who compete in individual sports at an elite level are generally accustomed to personal branding strategies, rarely have they been branded with other individual athletes to advance their individual brand and their stakeholders' brands.

Much is known in the literature in terms of brand, brand value, and value and brand co-creation. However, this case study on the FAB_IV brand creates a unique opportunity to go in depth into the value and brand co-creation of a group of individual athletes portrayed as a team brand as well as advancing knowledge on brand extension and sub-brands within a sport context. Moreover, this research aim at advancing current knowledge of value and brand co-creation by examining the social media aspect of this brand. Although the FAB_IV, the individual athletes and their stakeholders are active on social media platforms, there has yet to be a scholarly examination to identify the strategies employed by each stakeholder and how the content posted co-create the brand and value. In order to further the understanding of marketing and branding strategies on social media, research supports the efforts to move beyond the simple counts such as “Likes,” followers, and comments (McCorkindale & DiStaso, 2014).

An overview of the brand literature, the brand extension and subbrand literature, the brand and value co-creation literature, and social media literature along with sports management model with elements connecting to this study were examined in order to put the study into context. The purpose of this research was to understand the creation of a team brand with four individual elite athletes and how the stakeholders involved used social media to co-create the brand.

Literature Review

Brand and Value

The brand process has been analyzed in depth for the past few decades (Aaker, 1991, 1996; Keller, 1998; Kotler, 1997) with brand equity, brand image and brand identity being some of the main concepts to have emerged. Keller (1993, 2003) defines brand equity as the degree of familiarity and favourable associations an audience has with a specific brand where brand identity is the notion of creating associations built around brand as product, as organization, as person, and as symbol (Aaker, 1996). Freling, Crosno and Henard (2011) added the notion of brand personality appeal which they define as “a brand’s ability to appeal to consumers through the combination of human characteristics associated with it”. Corporate branding, when properly used, is a powerful tool for aligning the firm’s assets into developing strategic competitive advantages (Jones, 2010). A corporate brand has the potential for greater strategic impact than product brands since it is based on the identity of the firm itself (Balmer & Greyser, 2002). Aaker and Joachimsthaler (2000) argue that within the traditional branding model, the brand is used only to drive short-term results. de Chernatony and Riley (1998) argued that an effective brand strategy should be to inform consumers about distinctive characteristics and quality of the product or service the firm is offering or what Vargo and Lusch (2004) identify as the ‘value in-use for the consumer’. The value is therefore closely linked to the consumers’ perception of a product and/or service (Vargo & Lusch, 2004; Gronroos & Ravald, 2010).

In the current sport industry, there is an increasing awareness that attracting and keeping customers interested and loyal to teams as well as to the sports is of the utmost importance; high quality products and services are no longer enough (Hopwood, 2005). With competitiveness that

has never been more intense, businesses have to differentiate themselves from others who are offering similar products. Consequently, sport managers and scholars now view, manage and research teams and sports organizations as brands; focusing on the value the products and services they provide has for their consumers (Bauer, Sauer, & Schmitt, 2005; Gladden & Funk, 2002; Gladden, Milne, & Sutton, 1998; Ross, 2006).

Sport branding may be different from other organizations or products branding since most of the time, its consumers become loyal at an early age and rarely change their loyalty in order to support the competition (Beech, Chadwick & Tapp, 2000). Shank (1999) defines sports brand as “a name, design, symbol, or any combination that a sports organization uses to help differentiate its product from the competition”. This definition is consistent with Aaker (1991), Kotler (1997) and Keller’s (1996) brand definitions, while adding the sport dimension to it.

Brands are supplied with value by the associations the fans make with these brands (Rosca, 2013). In the sport management literature, value is often assumed to be “created by several firms or organizations (e.g. sport teams, league, media, event organizer and others in the case of sport events) that combine their resources.” (Woratschek, Horbel & Popp, 2014) hence the concept of co-creation of value. Underwood, Bond & Baer (2001) indicated that to create customer-based brand equity, sport organizations should develop strategies to encourage a deeper relationship between the team and their fans.

Organization and products are often referred to as brands, but people can also become brands of their own. While Till (2001) considers that only athletes with a celebrity status and who have earned significant amounts of money through endorsement can be viewed as brands, Thomson (2006) defines the notion more broadly to any athletes who is subject of marketing

communications efforts. While the brand value of each athletes may vary greatly, Williams, DaeYeon, Agyemang, and Martin (2015) argue that all professional athletes are brands. Williams, Kim, Walsh, and Choi (2015) have a broader definition that also encompasses the consumers perspective and define the athlete brand as “a set of associations (e.g., name, personality) of any particular athlete who identifies and distinguishes themselves in the marketplace, and promises a functional and emotional experience to consumers.” Despite the number of athletes using their celebrity status in the greater marketplace, researches on this phenomenon have yet to be done (e.g., Arai, Ko, & Kaplanidou, 2013; Arai et al., 2013; Hughes, 2007; Parmentier & Fischer, 2012; Thomson, 2006). Athletes play an important role in helping organizations “increase awareness and create positive associations for their products and services, all the while building their own personal brand” (Erdogan, 1999). An athlete’s brand rarely exist by itself, but in relation with other brands such as a team or a league for which it plays or the tournament or event in which the athlete performs. In order to bring additional value to their fans and organizations while at the same time building a successful brand, individual athletes, should distinguish themselves within their team, league, and marketplace by putting forward a positive and unique image (Martin, 2009).

Brand Extension and Sub-brands

Brand strategies encompasses the notions of brand equities and identities, brand architecture and other strategies such as brand extension and the creation of sub-brands, to create and sustain meaning in value for an organization’ brand (Uggla, 2005). Even though these strategies should be carefully planned they are usually marginalized in the business plan and managers can view brand strategies as being too abstract or overtly concerned with details (Kapferer, 2001).

Well known brands use brand extension as a marketing strategy to bring new products or a new category to the market as “brand extension is an obvious strategy for growth” since it reduces the cost associated with the creation of a new brand. The brand extension strategy is especially useful when a company has built a strong equity for its brand but now faces limited potential growth in its market (Sheinin, 1996). Prior to Kapferer study, most previous research on brand extensions “had considered only single extensions, finding that evaluations of a brand extension will depend on consumer perceptions of the original or core brand (e.g., its perceived quality) and the similarity or "fit" between the core brand and the proposed extension” (Keller & Aaker, 1992, p. 42).

Consumers’ evaluations of brand extensions are determined primarily by the perceived quality of the parent brand and the fit between the original and the extension product categories. Furthermore, brand extensions must not only have a logical fit with consumer’s perceptions, it has to fit their expectations and have leverage in the new category (Uggla & Fillipson, 2009). Therefore, in order for the extension to be positively evaluated, the consumer needs to be able to make sense of it (Keller and Lehmann, 2006).

A brand can also help an organization to expand its product categories; many organizations have utilized the brand extension strategy to influence their existing brand equity (Glynn & Brodie, 1998; Kapferer, 2001; Keller and Lehmann, 2006; Sheinin, 1996).

In the sports and entertainment business, selling merchandise to fans is a way for a team or a brand, an athlete or an entertainer to increase their brand equity. Specifically to sports, these merchandise include team logos and colors, provides a way to connect people with their favourite teams (Thrassou, Vrontis, Kartakoullis & Kriemadis, 2012). All major sports teams,

and arguably even amateur sports teams have jerseys, hats, license plates, stickers and a variety of other goods that fans can purchase. Nevertheless, as explained in the brand and value literature section, a brand is way more than a name and a logo that is being displayed or worn by fans.

Nowadays, organizations have to manage brands that are complex, involve multiple brands and sub-brands, brand extension and endorsed brands. Aaker and Joachimsthaler (2000) define these relationships, structures and set roles as brand architecture. Within the Brand Relationship Spectrum (BRS) tool, the authors define the driver roles that brands play which are divided within four various strategies : house-of-brands, endorsed-brands, subbrands and branded house. BRS puts forward and explains in depth the notion of subbrands. Subbrands can be define as “brands connected to a master or parent brand and augment or modify the association of that master brand.”

There is a close link between the subbrand and the master brand which has an impact, either positive or negative, on the association. When both the master and the subbrand have important drivers roles, it is considered to be a co-driver role. Subbrands also play a role in conserving brand-building resources in part by leveraging existing brand equity or by singling a new or different offering (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000).

A part from the fact that within the literature the word ‘subbrand’ has been written in various ways (e.g ‘subbrand’ and ‘subbrand’), the ways in which researchers define this notion vary as well. Sheinan’s (1998) explains that for a brand to be considered a subbrand’s it must contain both the parent brand’s name and the new brand’s name. For the purpose of this research, Aaker and Joachimsthaler’s definition of subbrands, will be use to define subbrand as it is less restrictive and closer to today’s reality than Sheinan’s view.

Brand and Value Co-creation

Vargo and Lusch (2004) in their seminal article put forth eight foundational premises to service-dominant logic (S-D logic) instigating a shift in the marketing literature as the focus was now on the exchange process much more than on the good that was exchanged. Therefore value was not only coming from the product and the firm but from the consumer and their global experience. Brody, Glynn and Little (2006) indicated that Vargo and Lusch paid little attention to branding, often referring to it indirectly and often implied that the branding notion was more relevant to products driven marketing. The authors wanted to integrated branding into S-D logic and therefore created the service-brand-relationship-value (SBRV) triangle which highlights the importance of the service brand and the role of the experiences to co-create value between the brand and its various stakeholders. This conceptual model expanded the works of Berry (2000), Grönroos (2006), Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004), and Van Durme et al (2003). In their model, Van Durme et al (2003) integrate “the 'three promises' framework, also known as the value triangle with the idea of triadic brand relationships.” However, this model is outdated as it is now recognized that brand are co-created by more than just employees and consumers. While Berry’s (2000) model “provides only a starting point for understanding the role of ‘the service brand’ within the S-D logic”, Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004) shifted to the experience-centric co-creation perspective by saying that the brand becomes the experience. Payne et al (2009) also looked at the experiences in order to understand co-creation and branding. They integrated co-creation and branding in order to deepen the understanding on customer relationship experiences.

Co-branding is “a collaboration of two brands with significant customer recognition to promote an existing or new product or service to the benefit of both partners (Blackett and Boad,

1999).” Even if, many firms think they own and control their branding, Ballantyne and Aitken (2007) share an opposite view saying that customers, suppliers and other stakeholders co-create brand meanings, which are socially constructed and shared in the public domain. Thus, one of the essential parts of relationship marketing is involving the customer in co-creating the value (Rosca, 2013). The shift of focus from brand image to brand identity comes from a need to create more credible exchanges between the brand and the consumer; an exchange that is mostly about the co-creation of value (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004).

In a similar context, Iglesias, Ind and Alfaro (2013) put forward the organic view of the brand (OVB) in an effort to understand how value is co-created in a network filled with various stakeholders. In essence, the OVB sees brands as organic entities built together with various stakeholders within process that is beyond the control of the organization. Managers, must then accept they cannot control every aspect of their brand but “they can guide, influence and inspire consumers to co-create brand meaning, but unilateral identification and building of all aspects of brand positioning [...] is no longer possible” (Haarhoff & Kleyn, 2012) The OVB acknowledge a brand's sense of direction is define by the various stakeholder involved.

While, within the traditional branding model, the brand is mostly used to drive short-term results, in order to foster a long-term relationship, leading and managing a sports entity with a relationship marketing philosophy can engage the fans into co-creating value (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000; Rosca, 2013). The market offering made by a team is not only attributable to the athletic performance, but by any proposition made to fans that are centred on the branding of the club. By entering into a dialogue with the brand, fans are co-creating value (Rosca, 2013). According to Merz & Vargo (2004) brand value is: “co-created through network relationships and

social interactions among the ecosystem of all stakeholders”. In the case of branding, co-creation expands to more than consumers but also encompasses stakeholders (Hatch & Schultz, 2010) athletes, coaches, cities, sponsors, committees and non-profit organizations are usually involved in co-creating the value and the brand of a sports team. The brand has to create value for the fans and the stakeholders; it is considered that if fans find value in a certain product or service a variety of stakeholders are also going to be able to extract value (Rosca, 2013). Financially, in sports this means that by adding value to the fan-relationship, stakeholders of the team will also receive additional value (Rosca, 2013). However, in spite of the importance placed on stakeholders and their role as co-creators, consumers and marketers have been, more often than not, the only stakeholder groups branding researchers have examined (Hatch & Schultz, 2010). Mitchell, Agle, and Wood (1997) stated that stakeholders are persons, groups, organizations, or institutions that can influence or be influenced by an organization’s activities. For the purpose of this research, this is the definition of stakeholder that will be used. Jones’ (2005) model put forward ten categories of stakeholders that create brand value: consumers, managers, employees, suppliers, distribution partners, media, competitors, non-government organizations, governments, and public opinion. In this case study, managers and employees from Diving Canada, athletes from the FAB_IV, sponsors, Canadian Olympic Committee (COC) managers, marketing consultants and medias are the FAB_IV main stakeholders that have been identified. These various stakeholders will be confirmed during interviews with Diving Canada.

Social Media

Marketing is relying less and less on traditional advertising and is now using various channels, such as product placement, sponsorship, event marketing and social media to attract

consumers (Arvidsson, 2006). The popularity of the Internet has changed the way sport organizations communicate with their stakeholders (Pedersen, Miloch & Laucella, 2007). Social networking sites or social media sites refers to “applications that enable users to connect by creating personal information profiles, inviting friends and colleagues to have access to those profiles, and sending e-mails and instant messages between each other” (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Social media are becoming increasingly important as they facilitate interactivity and co-creation which allow for user-generated content to be shared amongst and between brands and individuals (Filo, Lock & Karg, 2014). Because of social media, marketing has shifted from mass market to heavily specialized segmentation (Constantinides & Fountain, 2008) which also allow brands to be in charge of the information they want to share with both mass audiences and targeted audiences (Pegoraro 2010; Clavio & Kian, 2010; Wallace, Wilson & Miloch 2011).

Sport brands are becoming a powerful marketing and communication tool in the sport industry, with teams, leagues, coaches, athletes, and managers manifesting their presence on a daily basis (Pegoraro, 2010). Many sport organizations are trying to have an online presence in the aim of building and developing relationship with their stakeholder and their fans (Thompson, Martin, Gee, Eagleman, 2014). Social media has impacted both how the sports organizations communicate with customers and how sports organizations manage their athletes (Henderson, 2011). Many research have described social media has a valuable way of building meaningful relationships between stakeholders evolving in the sport industry (Hambrick & Kang 2014; Williams & Chinn, 2010). By having a strong social media presence, brand awareness is increased (Kwon & Sung, 2010) and a strong influence on a team’s brand equity can occur (Watkins, 2014). Watkins found that social media increase both fan identification which is de-

defined as “the commitment and involvement a sport fan has with the organization” and provided an outlet to deepened the consumer-brand relationship. Athletes are also taking advantage of these platforms to create stories around them (Lebel & Danylchuk, 2012; Sanderson, 2008) and share more details of their lives and personalities than mainstream media coverage would (Sanderson, 2013, 2014). They use social media platforms to interact directly with thousands or even millions of followers, and when used efficiently it could represent an effective way to market products, market themselves and ultimately create value (Hambrick et al., 2010; Pegoraro, 2010) Celebrity athletes attract potential consumers easily through their athletic abilities and personalities, making them ideal product endorsers (Shuart, 2007) and in order to be even more marketable, athletes have taken advantage of the social media platform.

Korzynski and Paniagua (2016) explain that there are three main power of social media for athletes : informing, interacting and inspiring and that these three powers, added to the sport performance, are in direct link with the athlete’s market value. In other words, the sports athletes need to use the powers of social media in order to maximize their market value: “first by sharing with their fans some details of their private lives (power of informing); second by motivating discussions with fans and other players (power of interaction); third by posting regular and inspiring personal updates on SM using text, graphic, and video content (power of inspiring)” (P. 186).

Stakeholders and organizations in the sport industry have been impacted by social as they are often first adopters and frequent users of various social media platforms (Pedersen, 2014). Thompson, Martin, Gee, and Eagleman (2014), in their study on social media strategy for National Sport Organization (NSO), found that four aspect would lead to developing a successful

strategy. First, stakeholders need a “clear understanding of how social media aligns with the organization”. Second, the social media strategy must take into account how and by whom it will be managed. Third the NSO has to know what their fans, consumers and stakeholders expect out of their social media experience and fourth there needs to be clear guidelines for the social media will be measured and monitored. As the social network phenomenon continues to evolve, sports organizations who focus on long-term consumer retention can strengthen their brand value by being active on social media and by promoting their athletes’ activity on diverse social media sites (Taigo, 2016).

The FAB_IV brand has activated its marketing strategy using social media platforms where the athletes also branded themselves using their personal accounts by posting pictures and content about their daily lives, training, competition, lifestyle, and sponsors among others. This study will look at the three main social media site used by the FAB_IV and their stakeholders : Twitter, Instagram and Facebook. Even though they are all social media, they have different purposes and are used differently.

Twitter is “what’s happening in the world and what people are talking about right now (Twitter, 2017a). It is a social media outlet where celebrities, news organizations, marketers, brands, athletes and ordinary users express themselves in 140 characters or less and connect with a community of followers. Since its 2006 launch, the social media platform has attracted, as of January 2017, 352 million monthly active users who send, on average, 500 million tweets per day (Twitter, 2017b). Killian and McManus (2015) have identified Twitter as a news gathering microblogging platforms where users can find condensed information or updates on current events. For this reason, Twitter is mostly used by companies, managers and brand to share im-

portant news and timely information relevant to their target market. Filo et al. (2015) performed an in-depth review of the literature related to sports and social media and noticed that the vast majority of studies focused only Twitter and neglected the other major social networks.

As for Facebook, this social media platform is built around the relationship management idea and is becoming increasingly popular among Internet users, not only to connect with friends and acquaintances, but also to interact with brands and products. With over 1.3 billion daily users (Facebook, 2017), Facebook enables members to create their own personal profiles, connect with friends and family members, post comments, upload user-generated content, use the private messaging feature, and publicly display their relationships and affinities to other members (Boyd and Ellison 2007; Chu and Kim 2011; Smith, Fischer, and Yongjian 2012).

Instagram was launched in 2010 and with just under 800 million monthly users (Instagram, 2017) is perceived as one of the fastest growing social media platform (Lunden, 2014). Yet, despite this claim, Instagram research has been scarce (Hu, Manikonda, & Kambhampati, 2014). Instagram, is a mobile photo (and video) capturing and sharing which provides users with “an instantaneous way to capture and share their life moments with friends through a series of (filter manipulated) pictures and videos.” (Hu, Manikonda, & Kambhampati, 2014).

Sports Brand Models

Many models have been created in order to have a better understanding of the branding process of a sports brand. First, in order to understand how athletes build their brand, Arai, Ko & Ross (2014) developed a model of brand athlete image (MABI) containing three key dimensions : athlete’s on-field characteristics, attractive external appearance, and off-field mar-

ketable attributes. Moreover, Ferrand, Chapelet & Séguin (2012) have also put forward a value co-creation framework in order to explain how the Olympic Games stakeholders co-create, control and protect the Olympic brand. Gladden (1998) created a model to describe how a team's antecedents (product, market and organization) can create brand equity and eventually lead to outcomes (i.e. increased in sponsorship, media coverage, ticket sales, etc) that are beneficial to the brand. Based on his previous findings and using Keller's (1993) theoretical framework of brand equity and because of the unique aspect of sport, Gladden's (2002) created the Team Association Model which identifies 16 possible brand association dimensions. These dimensions were put forward to have a better understanding of the way strong brands are created in sports and to know how sports teams can benefit from high brand equity (Gladden & Funk, 2002).

Williams, Kim, Walsh, and Choi (2015) developed the Athlete Brand Relationship Spectrum (ABRS) in order to “detail the role of athlete brands with regard to the nature of brand relationships” (p.79). The ABRS model was based on Aaker and Joachimsthaler's BRS model that was intended for product driven brands. The major difference in sports-brand architecture is that athletes, which are in most cases subbrands, have more control over their brand than the master brand (e.g. teams, leagues, tournaments or other organizations) has over them, which wouldn't be the case for product driven brands. The subbrand relationship, where the athlete is still somewhat dependent on the master brand, “is based on brand image transfer, or the ability of the athlete brand (i.e., subbrand) to transfer his or her image onto the image of the sport organization (i.e., master brand)” (Williams, Kim, Walsh, and Choi, 2015).

Even though parts of these various brand models could arguably explain some aspect of the FAB_IV brand, it is argued that none of them can capture the unique essence behind the co-

creation of FAB_IV brand. Arai, Ko & Ross model would be useful to have a better understanding of the individual athletes personal brand, which has an impact on the FAB_IV brand, but couldn't be applied to the team brand aspect of this research. Moreover, the FAB_IV brand couldn't be studied using only Gladden's model that was intended to understand sports team brands and sports franchises. Even though some of the dimensions including in its scale, such as the Star player or the Success dimension could arguably be modified in order to be transferred from a sports team perspective to the FAB_IV, others such as Tradition, Nostalgia or Stadium are typical dimension of sports team brand that can't be transferred to a newly created sports brand and even less to the FAB_IV. Ferrand, Chapelet and Seguin's model that was intended to understand events co-creation brings valuable information in terms of understanding co-creation within a complex stakeholders environment. However, major changes would need to be made to their model as the purpose of this study is not to understand event co-creation but the co-creation of a sports brand with four elite divers. As for the ABRS model, even though it explains in great depth the relationship between the athlete as a subbrand and the master brand, to examine the case study at hand, it wouldn't be much more useful in terms of understanding value and brand co-creation.

Context of this Case Study

With the 2016 Rio Olympic Games in mind, Diving Canada has teamed-up four of its woman medal hopefuls into one single marketing package : The FAB_IV. Even if the name was first given to the Beatles in the early 60s, FAB_IV stands for the first letters of each athlete's last name : Fillion, Abel, Benfeito and the four in roman letter is a stylized 'W' for Ware.

The four female divers are all Canadian from the province of Quebec. Filion, Abel and Benfeito are Olympic medalist and have competed in three Olympics (Beijing, London and Rio) and Ware made her Olympic debut in Rio. While Filion, Abel and Benfeito dive for Pointe-Claire Diving Club and are coached by Arturo Miranda, Ware dives for CAMO and is coached Aaron Dziver. However, all four athletes are managed by the same agent who also happens to be under contract with Diving Canada as a brand expert and marketing consultant.

Since London 2012, and as of June 2017, these four athletes have won 109 total medals, 21 gold, 49 silver and 39 bronze (diving.ca). The FAB_IV was created in early 2014 before the 2015 Pan-Am Games held in Toronto, Canada where each members of the FAB_IV were medals favorites. The Pan-Am Games was used as a platform to present the FAB_IV to the diving community, the medias and the fans.

The athletes within the FAB_IV group each compete individually and also partner with another member of the FAB_IV to compete in synchronized diving. Fillion and Benfeito are competing in the 10m synchronized event while Abel and Ware are competing in the 3m synchronized springboard event.

Just like athletes from a sports team would, each athletes from the FAB_IV have different sponsors while also having team sponsors such as Speedo and Gillette Venus, a Procter and Gamble brand. For example, Benfeito and Filion are both sponsored by BMW and Abel and Ware have a sponsorship deal with Visa. Individually, Abel is also sponsored by PwC and was a lead athletes in the *Ice in Our Veins* Olympic Campaign. Even though the four athletes are spon-

sored by Speedo, just like all members of the Canadian National Diving Team, some sponsors have decided to sponsor only one or two of the FAB_IV athletes.

As for social media, each athletes have their own personal verified Twitter, Facebook and Instagram account while the FAB_IV as a group also have an account on these three platforms. The Fab_IV used major events in which they were competing to launch their social media accounts. Instagram was the first platform used by the Fab_IV in January 2015 before the Diving Senior Winter National Championship. Facebook and Twitter were both used first in July 2015 days before the Pan American Games.

Research Purpose

The purpose of this research was to understand the creation of a brand composed of four individual elite athletes and how stakeholders involved used social media to co-create the brand. The study examined the unique context of the FAB_IV; four individuals divers branded as a team. More specifically, the study sought to answer these questions :

RQ1: Is the FAB_IV a brand in itself or a subbrand of Diving Canada?

a) What value do stakeholders see in the FAB_IV branding strategy?

RQ2: Are social media leveraged by the individual athletes and their key stakeholders to co-create the FAB_IV brand? If so, how?

This exploratory case study focusing on brand and value co-creation by a subbrand intended to contribute to the sport management literature in two ways. First, by looking at this unorthodox way of branding individual athletes into one single marketing package this research will expand the literature on branding. Even though practitioners have advanced their application of branding to human beings (Rein, Kotler, & Shields, 2006), “scholars have restricted the scope

of inquiry to the inanimate targets such as corporations, products, and services” (Hughes, 2007). Moreover, the notion of brand extension and subbrand have also been restricted to the products area. Williams, Kim, Walsh, and Choi (2015) acknowledge the gap by mentioning that future research in brand management should study athletes as brands. Second, the research aims at providing a better understanding of how national sports organization, athletes, sponsors, media and various stakeholders co-create sport brands in the context of social media. Therefore insights on social media branding strategies and challenges provide athletes, sports organizations, sports teams and arguably organizations outside of the sport industry the opportunity to increase their brand awareness by having a better understanding how activation work on social media. These findings also provide athletes and sports organization who have less resources the opportunity to adapt this strategy to their own reality.

Methodology

According to Creswell (2007), qualitative research is conducted because of the need of a complex detailed understanding of the issue that is best answered by talking with people or going in their environment. In this case, a single exploratory case study will be conducted in order to understand the branding strategies behind the creation of the FAB_IV brand, the activation strategies used by the various stakeholders and how FAB_IV has affected each individual athlete’s brand.

An exploratory case study is best suited when outcomes can’t be identified or expected (Yin, 2003). Moreover, this choice of method provides tools to study a complex phenomena deeply within its context (Yin, 2003; Baxter & Jack, 2008). Therefore the issue can be observed through more than one lens which allows for a variety of facets of the situation to be understood

(Baxter & Jack, 2008). By answering the research questions through a case study analysis made it possible to have an in-depth understanding of the process of value and brand co-creation surrounding the FAB_IV subbrand. Furthermore, case studies are rich, empirical descriptions of particular elements of a phenomenon that are typically based on a variety of data sources (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007).

Likewise, case studies can be used as the basis from which to develop theory inductively. Building theory from case studies is a research strategy that uses one or more cases to create theoretical concepts, suggestions and/or midrange theory from case-based, empirical evidence (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007). Before conducting a case study the unit of analysis must be determined (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007). In this case, the unit of analysis is the FAB_IV, and their stakeholders' involvement related to the activation of the FAB_IV brand prior to the 2016 Rio Olympic Games.

As mentioned earlier, case studies can be the basis for building theory or they could serve as insights and guidelines for future research involving social media and branding strategies used by an NSO in an individual sport context. Single case study are not to be used for generalizing or comparing with other researches however, it allows the researcher to look at a multitude of elements within the same contexts (Yin, 2003). Accordingly, the results found through this research could be used as a guide for future research.

Research Design

Creswell (2007) identifies a list of characteristics of a good qualitative study that clearly identifies the way qualitative research generates useful data. First of all by employing rigorous data collection procedures, that might include multiple sources of data, and make sure that the

researchers analyses data using multiple levels of abstraction (2007). Moreover, Bryman goes a little bit deeper in his book by suggesting that reality must be studied from the research participants' perspective in order to gain access to their interpretations through extended contact (2008). In order to insure the trustworthiness of this research, data triangulation and member check were the main strategies that were put into place. All steps and sections presented below were thoroughly discussed with the researcher's supervisor and some aspects were also discussed with peers within the sport management field. Once the interviews were conducted, everyone had the opportunity to review the transcripts and had the opportunity to confirm, add, comment on the transcript. Moreover, social media publications, the FAB_IV microsite, IOC documentations, magazine and news article made it possible to triangulate the data retrieve from the transcripts.

Epistemology

Constructivism is the epistemology that best suits this research. The main concepts being studied are branding, value co-creation and brand co-creation, which are all social constructs that are being co-created by the FAB_IV and their stakeholders.

Short semi-structured interviews were made with many of the FAB_IV stakeholders in order to have a general understanding of how they create their own reality and together how they co-create the brand. People describe their experiences by meaningfully constructing the environment that surrounds them and by explaining each situation (Crotty, 1998). Various actors can make sense of the same reality in a variety of ways (Crotty, 1998). In other words, it is important to understand meaning-making processes and their wider implications within this particular context (L'Etang, 2008).

Data Collection

An exploratory single case study is best understood by conducting semi-structured interviews since they provide deep and original explanations (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007). With this particular context where there is a small number of stakeholder involved and where their involvement in the project is different, focus groups or surveys wouldn't properly answer the research questions and therefore would limit the value of the findings (Fontana & Frey, 2005; Kamberelis & Dimitraidis, 2005). Interviews made it possible to get valuable, relevant and insightful data (Edwards & Skinner, 2009). Semi-structured interviews were performed to know first hand what strategies stakeholders used to co-create brand and value with the FAB_IV. Semi-structured interviews are useful to get precise answers while also permitting to get deeper explanations. They permit for structured questions that will be asked to all stakeholders while also being flexible to adapt to each stakeholder's views and change depending on their involvement in the project.

In total, seven interviews were conducted over the phone with various stakeholders representing both internal stakeholders and external stakeholders. The interviews were conducted between October 18th 2016 and January 20th 2017. The interviewees included two members of Diving Canada, the athletes' agent and marketing consultant for Diving Canada, one athlete from the FAB_IV, a Communication Manager from the COC and two major sponsors. Since many interviewees and the researcher were francophone, the choice of the language in which the interview was to be conducted was given to them. However, since they are also all bilingual and work or compete in an environment where people speak predominantly English, all the interviews were

conducted in English and lasted 40 minutes on average. The shortest was nineteen minutes and the longest up to an hour.

Another important characteristic of the case study is the fact that they are optimized when a variety of methods are used to conduct the research (Yin, 2003). In addition to the interviews, organization documents, Websites and media publications were used to triangulate the results; an approach often used in sports management research (Creswell, 2014, Edwards & Skinner, 2009). Documents such as International Olympic Committee regulations concerning social medias, magazine and journal articles about the FAB_IV as well as the FAB_IV micro-website were used. These documents were also analyzed in order to have a broader and more global portrait of the strategies and actions implemented by the various stakeholders. The data was used to have a better understanding of the the entire branding co-creation process, along with each stakeholder's involvement.

Prior to writing the interview guide, Instagram, Twitter and Facebook accounts from the FAB_IV, their sponsors, Diving Canada, the COC and medias have been looked at in order to have a sense of what was being said and to help with the creation of the questionnaire. Moreover from July 22nd 2016, two weeks prior to the Olympics, until September 4th, two weeks after the closing ceremony, the accounts of all stakeholders were monitored. The social media account that were monitored are presented in Table 1. Twitonomy was used to monitor all Twitter account, whereas NCapture was used for Facebook accounts. For the Instagram accounts, the researcher print screened all pictures and captions and imported them into Nvivo. While the initial plan was to monitor the accounts every day at the same time, the social media activities related to the FAB_IV wasn't happening on a daily basis outside of the days they were competing. Within

that 6 weeks period all social media posts from every stakeholder, mentioning or related to the Fab_IV or not, were imported with or into the appropriate software. Once the six weeks period was over, the researcher went through all the important posts and kept only the ones related to the Fab_IV or one of its athlete.

Even though it wasn't the initial plan, once the transcripts were analyzed, the researcher returned to the stakeholders' social media accounts in order to corroborate what various stakeholders were saying. At that point, the researcher didn't collect any new social media publications. Going back to visit their accounts, close to six months after the 2016 Olympic closing ceremony and after talking with the stakeholders, made it possible to have a deeper understanding. Moreover, the researcher was able to differentiate what the stakeholders intended to do and what they really did on social media.

Table 1. Stakeholders' Social Media Account Handles

	Twitter	Facebook	Instagram
Fab_IV	@FAB_IV	https://www.facebook.com/DivingFABIV	@fab_iv
Jennifer Abel	@jennabel91	https://www.facebook.com/JenniferAbel	@jennabel91
Meaghan Benfeito	@megbenfeito	No official/verified account	@megbenfeito
Roseline Filion	@roselinefilion	No official/verified account	@roselinefilion
Pamela Ware	@pamelaware1	https://www.facebook.com/Pammi.Wammi	@pamelaware1
Diving Canada	@divingcanada	https://www.facebook.com/DivingCanada	@divingcanada
Canadian Olympic Team (COC)	@teamcanada	https://www.facebook.com/teamcanada	@teamcanada
Équipe Canada (COC French)	@OlympiqueCanada	English version only	English version only
Team Canada Media Office	@TeamCanadaPR	NONE	NONE
BMW	@BMWCanada	https://www.facebook.com/BMW.Canada	NONE
Speedo	@SpeedoCanada	https://www.facebook.com/SpeedoCanada	@speedo_canada
Volkswagen Canada	@VWCanada	@VWCanada	@VWCanada
Visa Canada	@VisaCA	https://www.facebook.com/VisaCanada	NONE
PWC Canada	@PwC_Canada_LL P	https://www.facebook.com/pwccanada	NONE
Gillette Venus	@GilletteVenus	https://www.facebook.com/gillettevenus	@GilletteVenus
CBC Olympics	@CBCOlympics	NONE	@cbcolympics
CBC Sports	@cbcsports	https://www.facebook.com/CBCSports	@cbc.sports
Radio-Canada Sports	@RC_Sports	https://www.facebook.com/radiocanada.sports	@rc_sports
TSN	@tsn_sports	https://www.facebook.com/TSN	@tsn_official
RDS	@RDSCa	https://www.facebook.com/RDS	@rds

Sampling

The chosen method for this research was a purposeful sampling method. This strategy is based on the researcher's ability to interview people relevant to the situation being explored (Marshall, 1996). Therefore, the participants have been chosen according to their involvement and participation in either creating the FAB_IV brand or in being part of its brand activation strategy. Like mentioned earlier, stakeholders have been identified and represent people and organizations behind the FAB_IV brand, namely : the COO of Diving Canada, Diving Canada's Marketing consultant and athletes' agent, Diving Canada's Media Relations Manager, a member from the COC, individual athlete from the FAB_IV and sponsors. The purposeful sampling method also contributed to the trustworthiness of the research by making sure that only relevant stakeholders were taking into accounts.

In addition to the purposeful sampling method, a snowball method was also planned. However, when all the interviews were done and the transcript were read over a few times, no other stakeholders other than the ones already interviewed were identified as needing to be added to the interviewee list.

The initial intent was to interview all four athletes, member of the medias and more sponsors. However, in agreements with the ethics guidelines regarding the participants solicitation and their rights to participate or not in a study, after three unsuccessful attempts the targeted participants were removed from the list. Therefore, even though the original plan included ten interviews, seven were completed. Although some FAB_IV members and sponsors weren't included in the research, these groups were still represented and the reading of the data indicated satura-

tion. Data saturation was reached within the sample interviewed, in the sense that the people who were interviewed permitted to gain a deep understanding of the case study at hand and while they all added valuable information depending on their main role and responsibilities, the same core message was repeated which contributed to identifying the four main themes. Even though each stakeholder had its own realities and its own role in the project, many aspect were similar within each transcripts leading the researcher to conclude that saturation was reached and therefore there was no need to seek further interviews.

Transcription

The interviews were all recorded and then transcribed using Express Scribe in order to increase the rate of transcribing and to create professional and accurate transcripts. Moreover, since seven interviews were conducted, this program was used to create uniform transcripts in terms of layout and therefore make it easier to regroup key elements into themes and concepts once uploaded into the qualitative software program NVivo (Qualitative Solution and Research 2012, version 10). Using these software facilitate the organization of the data (Creswell, 2014). Once the transcription of an interview was completed, the interviewee had the opportunity to read and reviews their interview transcript. While, most stakeholder didn't want or feel the need to review their transcripts, one stakeholder added a few comments in order to explain more precisely what had been said during the interview.

Data Analysis

The data analysis was twofold to include both a content analysis for the social media platforms data and a thematic analysis to analyzed the interview transcripts.

Thematic Analysis. The researcher performed a thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), which is considered to be a form of analysis amenable to the constructivist perspective. The interview phase and the transcription phase are considered to be the first phase where the researcher familiarized themselves with the data. Moreover, by reading the transcripts several times and taking notes of preliminary ideas the researcher familiarized herself even more with each transcript. Prior to analyzing the database as a whole and looking for prevalent themes across the data, each interview were looked at individually. Short memos were used on the first reading and became the first step in creating categories. By knowing each stakeholder's view, relation with each other and with the subject of this research and opinion on the subject it helped to have a better understanding of their role in the brand and value co-creation of the FAB_IV. Additionally, this way of analyzing each transcript on it's own served as a triangulation method. Once this individual analysis was completed, the researcher organized the meaning units from the entire database into initial codes emerging from the transcripts. As such, the analysis was mainly inductive in nature. Nevertheless, the researcher also took into consideration the literature in order to compare and contrast the theme with previous findings related to brand and value co-creation. The next step involved reviewing and refining the themes. In this phase, the researcher worked to ensure that the themes created offered coherent patterns of meaning and helped answer the research questions. This reviewing and refining stage was completed once the researcher was satisfied with the schematic representation of the relationship between the different themes and categories. The researcher then proceeded to the final refinements of the thematic map by finding the essence of each themes and determining what aspect of the data better suit the different themes. Since the data provided inductive themes, the relation between each theme

also had to be identified to ensure that each category was well defined and more importantly to know within which themes each meaning unit had to be placed without any overlap between the themes. Sub-themes also emerged at this stage of the analysis to help refine the broader themes. This stage was completed once all the themes were clearly define. In the final phase, the researcher conducted the final analysis in order to write the discussion and results section. The overall analysis will be presented in order to demonstrate the merit of this research as well as to answer the research questions.

Content Analysis. The content analysis encompasses Twitter, Facebook and Instagram statuses and caption referring to the FAB_IV or at least one of its athletes that were shared by the various stakeholders. This analysis was adapted on a inductive approach in order to enhance the knowledge specific to this context (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In fact, the researcher based the codes, discovered through recurring theme on the social medias statuses and captions, according to existing literature and on the research questions (Forman & Damschroder, 2008). The content analysis was divided in three main phases : immersion, reduction and interpretation (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Forman & Damschroder, 2008). First, in the immersion phase the researcher “engages with the data and obtains a sense of the whole before rearranging it into discrete units for analysis.” (Forman & Damschroder, 2008, p.47). Throughout this phase, the researcher took notes of preliminary ideas, questions and comments in order to keep track of every thought and to describe themes and connection amongst the data.

During this phase, all social media publications and pictures that were not related to the FAB_IV, to diving Canada, it's athletes or diving as a sport were deleted. In order to know if a social media post or picture would be kept onto the next phase, a series of questions were deve-

loped and can be found in Table 2. At least one ‘yes’ had to be checked in order for the social media publication to go onto phase 2. Whereas all social media publications posted through the FAB_IV accounts or by Diving Canada and the FAB_IV athletes were kept, most publications from news outlets, the COC and sponsors were discarded as they were not, in any way, related to the FAB_IV or their sports. For example, car pictures posted by BMW or soccer, football and other sports news publications from TSN were automatically discarded.

The second phase consisted of reducing the data into codes in order to provide classification for the analysis (Forman & Damschroder, 2008). In this phase, the raw data were reduced to encompass only those relevant to answering the research questions, the data was broken down into themes and thematic segments and reorganized into categories addressing the research questions.

Table 2. Questions Asked in Order to Identify Social Media Publications Relevance

	Yes	No
Picture or post has been published by one of the FAB_IV athletes or by the FAB_IV accounts		
Picture or post is related to diving as a sport		
Picture or post shows or identifies (tag) one or more of the FAB_IV athletes		
Picture or post mentions the #FAB_IV		
Publication was made by a sponsor during ‘Rule 40’ blackout period and can be linked to the Olympics.		
To be kept at least one ‘Yes’ need to be checked		

Three main categories, which encompasses all social media publications that were kept from the first phase, were created in this second phase. The first category is identified as sponsor activation. This category includes publications from the sponsor showing or talking about one or more of the FAB_IV athletes, publications made from Diving Canada or one of the FAB_IV athlete mentioning a sponsor or showing the sponsor's logo. The second category refers to the stories, the behind the scenes, the friendships and lifestyle. This category's publications were mostly showing the athletes doing something outside the sport of diving. The third category includes publications sharing competition results, events schedule and congratulatory messages. Table 3 shows the categories as well as examples for each of them.

Table 3. Social Media Categories

Category	Type of publication
Sponsor activation	- Meaghan Benfeito publishes a picture of the BMW she drives - The athletes are seen training in a Speedo outfit. - Visa publishes a picture of Pamela Ware and Jennifer Abel in the Visa lounge at the Olympic Village in Rio.
Stories - Behind the scene - friendship and lifestyle	- The athletes share a picture of them wearing the ninja turtles costume at an Halloween party - Jennifer Abel shares a picture of her doing a difficult yoga pose - Roseline Filion shares her love for fake eyelashes - Meaghan Benfeito share a picture of her and her sisters
Competition results and schedule & Congratulatory messages	- Diving Canada publishes upcoming events where the girls will compete - Jennifer Abel retweeted a Tweet from PWC congratulating her on qualifying for the finals at the Olympics. - The COC wishes good luck to Meaghan and Roseline who are about to do their first dive in the 10m Synchro final in Rio.

The third phase, consisted at looking at the codes in order to regroup and reorganize the data, write descriptive and interpretive summaries and find key results (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

As a result of the content and thematic analysis, four main themes have emerged and will be presented in the results and discussion section.

Results and Discussion

The result section discusses the findings around the four main themes - brand strategies and implementation - sponsorship and sponsorship activation - media and fan interest - stakeholder's relationship.

Social Media was one of the main focus of this thesis and therefore was thoroughly discussed with all stakeholders. Whether as a tool to leverage the sponsorship agreement, used as publicity tool to foster the fan-athletes relationship or to promote events and competition, social media were widely mentioned through out the interviews. Therefore, even though social media, the core of this study, could have been considered as a theme of its own, it will be discussed within each theme separately. In fact, analyzing social media as a theme of its own would have been a limitation of this study as it wouldn't have made it possible to really understand each of the four themes identified in-depth and how they related to the co-creation of a sports brand on social media.

Table 4. Main Quotes Related to Each Themes and Sub-Themes

Themes (<i>Sub-themes</i>)	Main Quotes
Brand strategies and implementation	"It was a way of packaging and marketing them in a different way, something creative and we stuck to it and it worked."
<i>Subbrand of Diving Canada & Social Media Brand Strategies</i>	"We didn't have a strict strategy in place, each week it was depending a lot on what was going on we would just adapt and make sure that it was happening".

Sponsorship and sponsorship activation	“I love how they call themselves the FAB_IV, I think it was a great way to really showcase all four of their skills. You can have any standalone athlete, they still made it to market individually, but collectively as a team, it was really nice to see that.”
<i>Sponsorship agreement & Rule 40</i>	“But the other thing that I think is really really important too to understand is that finding corporate sponsor for the girls and for the sports is not just about money. Yes, that is always important obviously and you know it's great. As important is how these companies activate against their investment.” “there’s a huge social media component in every sponsorship agreement.”
Media Interest	“The FAB_IV concept was new, it was fresh, it was something that the media lashed on too and we were getting the word out there and I think it allowed us to stand out.” “it gave great visibility in the media and it humanized the message and put a face to our brand. I think it was a great strategy” “I think they all saw something interesting for their viewership or their readership. I was just something different, I would say that really all of them really supported us”.
Stakeholder’s relationship	“they loved the program, but they say they could never do it because they’re not big enough and they don’t have the same relationship with their athletes that you need to have”
<i>Trust, Communication, Establishing relationship & Fostering relationship through social media</i>	“ we had already a fair amount of trust with the athletes so the Fab_IV and we had a good relationship with their parents and a good relationship with their coaches so we thought ok let's all get together and make it all work leading onto the Olympics.”

Brand Strategies and Implementation

This section discusses the branding strategy behind the creation of the FAB_IV program and how these strategies were implemented. The interviews with the various stakeholders held

valuable information pertaining to the branding strategy and the way each of them viewed and more importantly co-created the FAB_IV brand.

Subbrand of Diving Canada. An athlete's brand rarely exists by itself, but in relation with another brand such as the team, sport organization or a league for which it plays or the tournament or event in which it performs. In this case, the athletes are in relation with diving as a sport, Diving Canada as the National Sport Organization they represent and also with the COC and the Olympic Games as they are Olympic divers as well as, for three of them, Olympic medalists.

Athletes are, in most cases subbrands and in light of Aaker and Joachimsthaler's definition of a subbrand, the FAB_IV as a program, is too closely linked and connected to the master brand, Diving Canada, to be considered as a brand of its own and must therefore be considered a subbrand. Williams, DaeYeon, Agyemang, and Martin (2015) explain that the relationship between the subbrand (i.e. the athlete) and the master brand (i.e. sport organization) is based on brand image transfer, or the ability of the athlete brand to transfer their image onto the sport organization. In other words, if an on- and off-field reputation directly impacts the organization, the athletes are considered to be a subbrand of the organization. Accordingly, if the behaviours, results and actions of an athlete has a direct impact, positive or negative, on the sport organization to which it is connected, then athletes must be, according to this definition, categorized as a subbrand. While the FAB_IV are four athletes and not just one, the idea is the same; the FAB_IV brand image is transferred onto Diving Canada and its other athletes. Diving Canada's COO explains the image transfer by stating that : “ I think that the attention that the FAB_IV created was influential for the boys because whenever we had more media on site covering an event because

of the FAB_IV, the men were also getting more visibility so I think overall for Diving it was really good.”

In addition to the notion of the image transfer, there are three main aspects that explains the reasoning behind the FAB_IV being a subbrand of Diving Canada. First, the need for Diving Canada to get funding led to the creation of the FAB_IV as a program rather than an entity of its own. Second, Diving Canada’s history of excellence contributed to the success of the FAB_IV. Thirdly, the FAB_IV program allowed the athletes and Diving Canada to go beyond the realm of sport and into the fashion and lifestyle segment.

The FAB_IV program was put together by Diving Canada in order to meet various objectives such as obtaining additional funding from the COC, attracting sponsors (events and athletes) and increase the overall brand image of Diving Canada, its athletes and diving as a competitive sport.

Diving Canada’s COO explains that “during our last quadrennial the COC invested in the NSF Enhancement Program (funding program) and it was their thinking that in order to have medal performances at the Olympic it was all about the athletes and coaching and training and competition but you also had to have best in class national sport organization supporting those goals.” This program was a voluntary business study of public sports organizations conducted by Deloitte and Touche and it identified that Diving Canada needed leadership, facilities and infrastructure, business management and marketing to all be in alignment. Specifically, they had to make sure that all these elements were trying to reach the same goals and objectives and to closely monitor their marketing actions. The following quote reflects the importance of the funding in the implementation of the FAB_IV program : “one of the challenges was how can we get some

funding to get a program like this off the ground and this is where the COC really jumped in and helped”. Once the funding was secure, Diving Canada used the money in alignment with Deloitte and Touche’s recommendation : “Knowing that the Olympics were coming up, we decided that the best use of the funding money was going to be for business development and marketing and knowing that we could access this kind of money from the COC and we had the right people in place for this as well so we thought ok let's all get together and make it all work leading onto the Olympics.”.

The second aspect that contributes to the finding that the FAB_IV as a subbrand of Diving Canada is linked to the legacy left by previous Canadian divers. The Communication Manager of the COC mentioned that : “There’s a long tradition of excellence in Quebec going back to Sylvie Bernier in ’84 and Annie Pelletier in ’96 and then Alex Despaties starting in ’98, so there’s this culture of excellence”. Diving Canada’s COO also had a similar comment and explained that their overall branding strategy was “to sell our athletes and our event and sell ourselves more as a boutique sport that has great success with international media. It goes way back to Sylvie Bernier in 1984 when she won a gold medal and we’ve been bringing two medal for every Olympic since then.” This suggest that Diving Canada’s branding strategy is deeply rooted into the legacy of excellence left by Diving Canada with so many well renowned Canadian Olympic medalists which continued with the FAB_IV athletes.

In addition to the legacy left by so many great Canadian divers and it’s impact on the FAB_IV, one other element that can explain the reasoning behind it being a subbrand is the fact that the FAB_IV allowed it’s athlete to move from the sports pages into the fashion and lifestyle area. Aaker and Joachimsthaler (2000) explain that when a brand creates or markets a subbrand,

one of the subbrand's main goal is to extend a master brand into a meaningful new segment. This is exactly the strategy that was taken by Diving Canada with the FAB_IV. Diving Canada's COO explained : "I thought that it was natural for us to present that concept because we were not trying to create something that didn't exist. They were friends, they were close, they were getting along very well, they were active on social media, they had the style and they had the results, so all of that together I was like Yeah!" A Communication Program Manager from the COC shared the same view : "the girls are really really good with the camera, so it's like connecting all the dots. So, the girls are good, girls are doing amazing results, the girls created their own unique brand and at the same time you use their own personal interests to build their brand".

Once the concept of FAB_IV was created, Diving Canada used the 2015 Pan-Am Games to launch it : "We hammered away at this brand hoping it was going to catch and that they were going to start to refer to it and refer to the girls as 'hey you know the FAB_IV'". It was a way of packaging and marketing them in a different way, something creative and we stuck to it and it worked." The intent behind the brand was to reach more than just diving enthusiast, to move the girls out of the sports and into lifestyle and fashion. What this quote also puts forward is the fact that Diving Canada, along with the athletes' agent and marketing consultant were in charge of the branding strategy and implementation of the FAB_IV. The idea was not to put diving as a sport or the athletes into the sport section of the newspaper and compete with major sports like hockey, football and baseball. Trying to compete with major sports and major sporting events would have been a tedious and expensive task, but showing the athletes as everyday girls who have passions and a life outside of the sport was clever. In fact, it made it possible to share the

FAB_IV and it's athletes to a broader audience and ultimately increase the athletes' brand awareness.

However, as much as the branding strategy attempted to distance the athletes from the sport by doing the photoshoot, fashion and lifestyle magazine articles, tv shows, etc., they are still divers and can't be dissociated from each other. As such whether in news stories, in magazines, on tv interviews, they were always referred to as divers or Olympic divers. For example, when CBC reported on the Thank You mom campaign, it used the title "Canada's diving Fab IV and the women who raised them" and in the text introduction it was written "Olympic divers Roseline Filion, Jennifer Abel, Meaghan Benfeito and Pamela Ware" to introduce them. They were also referred to as "Canada's FAB IV diving team" in a Country Living article on being proud Canadians. In a Reader's Digest Article, they were introduced as "Canada's women diving team, nicknamed the Fab IV, discuss their road to the Rio 2016 Olympics".

The FAB_IV brand wasn't strong enough to be considered a brand on it's own but still manage, as a subbrand to expand and incorporate the lifestyle and fashion industry, a segment that Diving Canada had yet to reach.

Social Media brand strategies. Across the board, media, fans, Diving Canada, the COC, the marketing consultant, the athletes themselves agreed that the FAB_IV concept was a great idea and that social media were an important aspect of the brand leveraging.

In order to support the FAB_IV launch and guarantee an online presence, Diving Canada created the FAB_IV Website which was a micro-site linked to Diving Canada's Website. This micro-site contained their biographies, the results from all their competitions, news about the divers and the links to all FAB_IV's social media account and also the women's individual social

media account link (i.e. Instagram, Facebook and Twitter). Diving Canada's main goal with social media was to "have the girls put pictures of them together when they were on the road, in competition or just training at the pool. It was the goal and it was the strategy to activate their presence on social media and so every time someone wanted to refer to them they could tag them in their posts or they could find them online". By creating the FAB_IV handle on the various platform and the hashtag (#fabiv) Diving Canada wanted people to easily find everything related to the FAB_IV : "the intent was to build a community, but that didn't happen". This intent was perfectly aligned with social media which provide sports organizations the perfect platforms to establish and foster relationships with their fans while also creating a brand community (Watkins, 2014). However, planning, or lack of planning, time and money were mentioned as the reasons why social media were not used and leveraged as much as they should have been or as much as Diving Canada would've wanted them to be.

When asked about the branding strategy, the planning, the day to day activities related to communications and marketing the COO and Marketing Consultant were well aware of the strategy, the marketing and communication efforts made and how it translated on a daily basis. However, when asked about the same aspects specifically regarding social media very few answers and real insights were provided. In fact, they both indicated that questions related to social media be asked to the person in charge of managing the FAB_IV accounts. Within diving Canada, the public relations and social media manager was the person in charge of all the aspect related to social media. Although the communications and marketing strategy was well defined and established, the social media strategy wasn't as well developed : "We didn't have a strict strategy in

place, each week it was depending a lot on what was going on we would just adapt and make sure that it was happening”.

On the other hand, sponsors had a well-developed social media strategy. For the sponsor the social media strategy was integrated in the overall communication and marketing strategy. One major sponsor even went in depth while explaining how they managed the day to day social media activities

We have our conversation calendar that is managed at every brand level and there you have like you imagine a calendar month and we suggest when we need to post. Sometimes it comes from the brand sometimes it comes from our sales platform or multi brand platform and sometimes it comes from the athlete directly and then we boost it or whitelist it. That is prepared by the brand PR agency mainly and we have a community manager who sort of manages the page.

According to the Communication Manager, Twitter was used more efficiently than the other two platforms and yielded better results as it was “easier to retweet, push on news stories while other platforms would have needed more time and dedication. Going into Rio, some media kept tagging the FAB_IV whether the handle or the hashtag in their post”. This is congruent with Twitter as it is the go-to social media platform where users search for news related information.

More importantly, Hutchins and Sanderson (2017), in their article on the primacy of sports television during the Rio Olympic, indicated that the main feature of Twitter was its role as “providers of news coverage and related information about the Games”. This also speaks volume in terms of what Diving Canada did on social media to leverage the FAB_IV brand : “Social media these days are a full time job. In creating original content as well, not just reusing information,

the girls just retweeted stuff on their FAB_IV accounts while we should've created original content for all of their three accounts. It was a challenge”.

The number of social media platforms needed to be managed also bring an additional degree of difficulty as the content related to each account must be regularly maintained (Killian & McManus, 2015). When asked about the main challenges of social media, the Public Relations and Social Media Manager of Diving Canada mentioned that with every additional social media account, the workload increase exponentially : “We have our own accounts for Diving Canada, so right there it's 3 accounts for Facebook, Twitter and Instagram to take care of and then you also need to oversee the athlete's account times 3 for each of them”.

One of the key elements to brand-building is the visual aspect or the way images can convey brand components (Hardy & Brian, 2012). There are many social media platforms that allow users to share images (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Instagram). However, scholarship has identified Instagram and Snapchat as two platforms predicated on sharing pictures and videos that are increasing in popularity (Smith & Sanderson, 2015). Diving Canada didn't use snapchat and didn't capitalize on Instagram to build the FAB_IV brand. While an account was created on January 2015, only 25 photos were shared with 622 followers and the last pictures was shared on April 2016, months before the Rio Olympics ([Instagram.com/fab_iv/](https://www.instagram.com/fab_iv/)). The pictures shared were used to promote sponsors, show their lifestyle and media appearances. However, these were not constant enough to create interest.

The athletes did a better job at using Instagram. As of August 2017, by posting pictures consistently on their personal Instagram page they had a combine following of close to 80k followers. As for Facebook, the FAB_IV page was deleted sometimes during the spring of 2017 but

the same observation were made during the data collection and analysis part ; very few post were made and there was a low level of engagement in terms of likes, comments and share. One interesting observation, is that compared to Instagram, three out of four athletes didn't use Facebook in order to leverage their brand or the FAB_IV brand. While two of them didn't have public profiles or pages, one did create a page with 500 followers, which is 15k less followers than on her Instagram profile.

While the branding strategy was well defined and executed by Diving Canada, the social media branding strategy and day to day activities weren't as well developed. Moreover, their social media accounts and publications weren't adding value to their overall brand strategy.

Sponsorship and Sponsorship Activation

Sponsors, along with other stakeholders, had an important role to play in the co-creation of the FAB_IV subbrand. Most stakeholders mentioned that the FAB_IV brought added opportunities in terms of sponsorship and in terms of activation possibilities and visibilities. The FAB_IV concept provided a platform both for FAB_IV as a group but also for the athletes individually as they became more marketable. While some sponsors went on to sponsor all four athletes within the FAB_IV, others decided to sponsor duos or a single athlete. When asked about the FAB_IV idea, one major sponsor said :

I thought it was great, it's lovely to see them they are all fuller very predominant women in diving and diving in Canada and on an international scale. I love how they call themselves the FAB_IV, I think it was a great way to really showcase all four of their skills. You can have any standalone athlete, they still made it to market individually, but collectively as a team, it was really nice to see that.

Another sponsor added that : “It was a great idea how they put them all together, it was nice to see it. It’s a bit different from what is usually done. Athletes are usually marketed individually, but they already had their success individually and then as pair of synchronized divers. The FAB_IV really showcases their work together and their qualities.”

Moreover, while their initial thinking was to try and find one athlete, one major sponsor said that once they got pitched the FAB_IV idea they were on board with all four athletes.

That sounds amazing! We would be the first brand to have four instead of just one athlete, so yes it sounded wonderful. At first it was supposed to be sort of a multi-brand partnership and then we signed them for Venus because Venus had visuals at the ready and images of diving and there was another one and it was gymnastics. So it was a great fit and we tied them with Venus instead of being corporate athletes.

In addition to the fact that the fit was perfect between the FAB_IV and the brand, the sponsor also saw value in signing all four of them and having them as a group : “ There was added value with having them as a group if only logistically because if you sponsor only one athlete out of four and they’re always hanging out together it makes it a bit more complicated. So it’s easier for us to leverage pictures of them together”

Also, one major aquatic sponsor decided to take advantage of the buzz surrounding the FAB_IV and sign all four athletes to their team.

They decided to have all four girls on their team which was an historical deal because normally they were only going with swimmers, sometimes synchronized swimmers and then you would only have one diver who was probably Alexandre Despaties. So when

they said ‘we love the concept, we love the FAB_IV, were are going to take the four of them, we are going to include them in our program’ that was amazing for us.

The public relations and social media manager of Diving Canada added to that that: I don’t think that this would have happened if the FAB_IV didn’t exist. They would’ve gone with whoever, maybe the better public profile or better international results. “They’re fierce, they look good, but they’re confident and they’re talented, so I think for them (sponsors) were getting more value than if they were only going with one athlete.”

Some sponsorship agreement obtained by the FAB_IV were also beneficial for Diving Canada and their events “the net results is that we ended up with 30 deals for the girls and some of those deals, and this is really important too for overall partnership with Diving Canada, resulted in extension to include sponsorship with Diving Canada and/or their events”.

The first tangible marketing tool the FAB_IV did was a commercial promotional photo-shoot “that was the big Genesis ; a photo shoot in Montreal and they had a double-decker bus”. This photoshoot was what the FAB_IV’s agent used to get meetings with sponsors and to have a visual in order to better explain the whole FAB_IV concept : “He was getting meetings with the sponsors selling all the athletes and it has resulted in meeting some of our (Diving Canada) goals in terms of increased sponsorship during the Olympic year.”

For Diving Canada these sponsorship agreements weren’t only important because of the financial aspect but also in terms of how the sponsor activated against their investment. Activation is a strategy that can enhance experience, and is defined as a sponsor’s independent and deliberate intent to promote and advertise its sponsorship (O’Reilly & Séguin, 2009) or in other words, the money spent, or marketing effort made, after the sponsorship deal has been made to

promote the sponsorship to target audience (O’Keefe, Titlebaum & Hill, 2009). One of Fab_IV’s main sponsor who is also Diving Canada’s sponsors was providing apparel to the team: “We do their outfitting, every suit they wear is Speedo, their bathing suits, track suits, flip-flop, shorts, so it’s a very heavily supported on the apparel front and then, we support them on the social media bases we support them anytime they have a commercial to shoot or they need to do an event, we support them as well”.

There was a time when paying money for an athlete to wear a shirt with the company’s logo was enough. However, sponsorship has grown to be an important element of a marketing strategy and as such activation is a key element (O’Keefe, Titlebaum & Hill, 2009)

But the other thing that I think is really really important too to understand is that finding corporate sponsor for the girls and for the sports is not just about money. Yes, that is always important obviously and you know it's great. As important is how these companies activate against their investment. So for example Visa came on board with Pamela and Jennifer and that relationship ended up including them as key athletes in Visa World-wide advertising campaign.

The various sponsorship deals created a lot of exposure possibilities for the FAB_IV “because corporations end-up investing in these programs that helps your athletes become higher profile which leads to more attention and attracts more corporate sponsors and interest. And now what happens is that other companies will be like : ‘hey there’s something happening with those stars’”. For the FAB_IV specifically, it translated into Jennifer Abel being the lead athlete for the Canadian Olympic Committee’s *Ice in Our Veins Olympic Campaign* ; BMW sponsored Roseline Filion and Meaghan Benfeito and activated through billboards in all its Canadian dealership and ;

Pamela Ware and Jennifer Abel were key athletes in Visa Worldwide advertising television campaign. The four athletes, along with their mothers, were also featured in Procter & Gamble's 'Thank you mom' campaign in addition to being sponsored by its Gillette Venus brand. The 'Thank you mom' campaign sponsorship was first announced at a media event in Montreal with all four athletes and their mothers present. This resulted in coverage in sports, fashion, lifestyle and entertainment medias.

In an article published a few days before the 2016, Rio Olympics, BNN.ca listed "5 Canadian Olympians who scored big with sponsors". Amongst the list were high profile athletes such as Andre DeGrasse and Eugenie Bouchard as well as golfer Brooke Anderson, pole vaulter Shawn Barber and diving's FAB_IV athlete Meaghan Benfeito. The article, featuring a picture of Meaghan and Roseline, mentioned that Meaghan's deal with BMW is amongst the main reason for her being on the list. Roseline Fillion, also sponsored by BMW, was most likely near the top 5 as well.

For the athletes' agent, the perfect example of how the FAB_IV contributed to elevate the brand recognition and value of the athletes is Pamela Ware. Pamela had four personal endorsement deals going into Rio without even being an Olympian yet. "How many athletes have that type of corporate support that aren't Olympians yet and individually aren't medal favorite? So the program itself and her being part of it was a huge benefit for her"

Sponsorship agreements. One other key element that was identified is the agreement between the sponsor, the athlete and Diving Canada. This aspect is important because sponsors want to know how – and especially how much – a sponsorship deal with an athlete will benefit them. As such, they must have a measurement unit or tool to assess the value. While return on

investment (ROI) is important, it is, more often than not, unable to directly tie the results to the exact sponsorship activity. Consequently, sponsors must have other ways to measure success. These include return on objectives (ROO) and more importantly how a campaign may increase store traffic, websites (O'Keefe, Titlebaum & Hill, 2009) and social media accounts.

Social media are an important tool that allows sponsors to broadcast and leverage their sponsorship agreement. When talking to one of the Fab_IV athletes she was really impressed that her Facebook account followers increased by almost 30k followers during the Olympics bringing her followers to 40k. Without being able to know how this increase translated financially having 30k more people following an athlete within a span of two weeks clearly indicate that the brand awareness has increased and therefore that her sponsors had more visibility.

An important part of any sponsorship deals are the contracts between all the parties involved and the willingness for each party to uphold their end of the contract. In this specific case, the requirements varied from one sponsor to another but overall the athletes's presence to campaign launches, press conference and media events, the sponsor exclusivity in their field and sharing and promoting the sponsorship agreement on social media and interviews were the main areas mentioned in the contracts.

Today, sponsors view sponsorship in a more strategic and holistic way; as an ever-evolving platform, which facilitates communication with multiple stakeholders (Meenaghan, 2013). One major sponsor explained that "when we file a contract with a celebrity or an athlete, we describe what the ask is and it generally revolves around the amount of tweets or Instagram". For the apparel sponsors, the athlete had an exclusive sponsorship deal, meaning that they couldn't be seen with aquatic sports gear other than their sponsors brand whether during competition

event or on pictures shared on social media. According to both the sponsor and the public relations and social media manager, the athletes are always very conscientious about what they are wearing and making sure it fits with their sponsorship requirements.

According to Diving Canada's public relations and social media manager : "there's a huge social media component in every sponsorship agreement." The athletes had to meet specific requirement in terms of tweets, statuses and pictures, these 'asks' were also monitored by the public relations and social media manager in order to make sure that all the requirements were met. The big companies know exactly what they want and what they need when it comes to social media : "they would send us an email saying 'hey guys on Monday we are going to release this news at that time and we would like to have the girls retweet or post something'". The public relations and social media manager would then contact the athletes to relate the information with examples of what they could tweet or write and then follow-up to make sure it was done properly.

Rule 40. Another important sponsorship aspect specific to this case study was the blackout period during the Olympic for non-Olympic sponsors also known as the rule 40. The rule states that "Except as permitted by the IOC Executive Board, no competitor, coach, trainer or official who participates in the Olympic Games may allow his person, name, picture or sports performances to be used for advertising purposes during the Olympic Games." (olympic.org). Rule 40 applies nine days prior to the Opening Ceremony until three days after the Closing Ceremony of the Rio 2016 Olympic Games. The COC, Diving Canada and its athlete were all very mindful of this rule and were careful about what they were publishing. One of the athletes reposted on Instagram a non-Olympic sponsor picture the day before the blackout period came into

effect. However, one of the FAB_IV's main sponsor as well as a duo's sponsor were also official Olympic Sponsor which contributed to the girl being well represented and the sponsorship relation well activated during the Olympics. As such, exempt of Rule 40, the duo sponsored by Visa posted a pictured of them at an event sporting a Visa bag using the Hashtag #TeamVisa : "the girls were on team Visa and had to do public appearances during the games and do some social media with Visa." The two athletes were also part of the Visa Worldwide television ad which played repeatedly on television and online during commercial break the entire duration of the Olympics.

During the blackout period, Speedo, one of FAB_IV main sponsor wasn't allowed to advertise as it was not an official Olympic sponsor but were the sponsor with the most visibility on the FAB_IV profiles as well as on the athletes individual social media profiles : "so the FAB_IV did a great job in Canada by maintaining and promoting the brand because we were not allowed to do it on our front. The athletes posted on Instagram and Facebook, on their Website, they released videos constantly with out logo and with 'congratulations' and 'Thank you' to us." Even more, the FAB_IV athletes were able to wear their Speedo sponsor's bathing suit during the Olympic and as such all pictures of them diving that were picked up by medias or shared on social media had their sponsor's logo on it. As for the Canadian Olympic team sport apparel as well as the medal ceremony, opening ceremony and closing ceremony apparel, they were sponsored by another Team Canada Official sponsor: Hudson's Bay.

BMW Canada, the automobile company, was sponsoring two of the FAB_IV's athletes while also being a Team Canada's official sponsor. As such, since BMW was an official team Canada sponsor the restriction during the blackout period were less than non-Olympic sponsors.

As such, on the day of the competition BMW Canada were posting picture congratulating the athletes on their performances adding the hashtag *#teambmw* and *#rio2016* to their caption. They were also posting a congratulatory post on Facebook every time a Canadian athlete won a medal.

PwC who is neither an official Olympic sponsor nor a Canadian Olympic sponsor used it's Facebook page on one occasion to congratulate its three *#teampwc* Olympic athletes : Andre De Grasse, Ryan Cochrane and Jennifer Abel without mentioning the Olympic directly in order to abide to Rule 40. PwC's social media platform of choice was Twitter to leverage their sponsorship but also for day to day business. Therefore, Twitter was used to retweet the COC, Diving Canada, the FAB_IV and Jennifer Abel's post throughout the Olympics.

Media Interest

The third main theme that emerged from the data was related to the interest of the media regarding the Fab_IV. Diving Canada and all stakeholders involved in the FAB_IV all agreed that it was a great brand strategy and were on board with the concept. Moreover, the interviewees identified that they each had a strong strategy in place regarding traditional media. When the FAB_IV went from an idea to a program, Diving Canada hired a full time public relations and social media manager; a position many other Canadian National Sport Organization can't afford or simply don't need. The main responsibilities of this manager, based in Montreal, was to oversee the media relations, public relations and social media aspects for the FAB_IV.

Prior to launching the program, Diving Canada's main objective was to make sure the media would be using the FAB_IV concept when covering the athletes. Investing time and money to create a brand with four athletes wouldn't mean much if the media would only refer to them as individuals. The public relations and social media manager of Diving Canada explained that "we

needed to make sure the media understood that and really present the concept to the general public.”

As such, Diving Canada used a press conference event at the winter nationals in Toronto before the 2015 PanAm Games to introduce the FAB_IV concept to the medias. This resulted in : “more articles talking about the FAB_IV. There was an article called *Would you watch the PanAm Games? : Our top athletes to watch* and instead of having the four girls separately they were presented as the FAB_IV.” According to the athletes’ agent the media started to see that : “there is something special about these girls it’s not just Canada’s national team divers.” For Diving Canada it was rewarding : “to see that the media were really starting to pick-up on the concept and they were just getting along and that was quite exciting”.

Moreover, Diving Canada’s COO mentioned that the success the program had with journalist was closely link to the logo and the concept : “when the artist came out with the stylized W for Ware and the numeral four it was WOW!. I knew the media would pick up on it like crazy. It was really interesting to see the look on their faces when I got there and presented the program and how their last name tied into. It’s so simple and easy for them to grab onto and it was a very successful announcement.” The COO, the marketing consultant/athletes’ agent, and the public relations and social media manager all realized the success of the program shortly after the PanAm Games : “We had CBC and Radio-Canada running ads on TV including the FAB_IV. They were mentioning the FAB_IV, there was a graphic around the girls and it was when we knew that had worked.” One athlete sums it by saying : “ the idea of the FAB_IV brought more a vision to the journalists.”

Canadian newspaper, TV talk shows, radio station, fashion magazines, sports station all

wanted to host the Fab_IV on their shows or publish a story about them. According to the Communication Program Manager for the COC, Diving Canada was able to create a connection between what the media wanted to broadcast and what Diving Canada wanted to achieve, what the athletes liked and what the fans wanted to know. They wanted to know the story behind the Fab_IV, what kind of clothes they liked, what were their favourite hobbies, were they really friends or just team mates, what are they doing when they are not diving or what kind of diet are they following, who the girls were when they were not diving and other things like what designer they liked to wear? These were all questions asked by the media and by followers on their social media post.

The media were interested in the human stories, the person behind the athlete : “They were also very supportive of the concept, most journalist were incorporating questions about the FAB_IV in the interviews”. Most of them wanted to know how the athletes liked it and how they felt being part of the FAB_IV : “they were curious to see how the girls were feeling about this and I remember Roseline saying that it was like being in a girl band, it’s so fun”. According to the athlete’s agent and marketing consultant, the fact that the concept was innovative played a big part : “The FAB_IV concept was new, it was fresh, it was something that the media lashed on too and we were getting the word out there and I think it allowed us to stand out.” Media, whether they are sports medias or not, are looking for stories that are relevant to their target market; stories that sells.

They (Diving Canada), were able to create unicity, because a lot of athletes have really good results and all athletes have amazing stories but with the FAB_IV they were really able to level that up. The name was brilliant and has a

high level of awareness and they connected it to the girls name so they were able to use something super famous and to tie it up with the personality of the girls because of who they are to make it an even more powerful story.

Another strategy that contributed to the FAB_IV being featured in many publications resulted from a photoshoot organized by Diving Canada in the fall of 2014 a few months prior to the FAB_IV concept being officially revealed.

We've been sending those pictures to the media so most of them issues of magazines just reused those pictures instead of doing their own photoshoot and we think that it really helped actually. Providing them content so that they didn't have to invest money in a photoshoot or having the girls in Toronto to take picture, so that was really useful for them to have access to those pictures.

As mentioned earlier, the branding strategy was based on getting the athletes out of the sports segment and into the lifestyle and fashion market. According to the public relations and social media manager this strategy was successful: “I have to say that I can’t think of one media who said ‘no the FAB_IV, I don’t think so, we’re covering diving and covering the athletes and their results, no one cares about the FAB_IV brand’”. One sponsor explained that by associating themselves with the FAB_IV : “it gave great visibility in the media and it humanized the message and put a face to our brand. I think it was a great strategy”

However, creating a brand and building a concept and an image around is not enough; people need to know about the brand. More importantly if a brand wants the media to help them attain their goals, it also has to meet medias needs. In other words, in order to achieve their own goals, the media have to generate content inlined with what their target market want. Diving

Canada's public relations and social media manager mentioned that : "I think they all saw something interesting for their viewership or their readership. It was just something different, I would say that really all of them really supported us".

Accordingly, amongst others, in April 2015, the athletes were featured in Radio-Canada's number one talk show *Tout le monde en parle*. In July 2015, they were featured in the lifestyle Quebec magazine *Coup de pousse*, in *Health Magazine* and in *Canadian Living*. CBC Sports broadcasted an in-depth profile on the athletes titled : *Canada's Fab IV: Best friends share common drive*. Diving Canada, with its FAB_IV program, was able to create the connection between what it wanted to achieve as a sports organization, what the subbrand needed to stand out and what stories the media needed to broadcast to meet the demands of its consumers.

In addition to the public's interest in the FAB_IV, the athletes ease at telling their stories in front of cameras or mics was key to a successful media campaign. While most Olympic athletes receive media training prior to a major event such as the Olympic Games, it does not guarantee success in media coverage. One of the COC's roles is to : "make sure that they feel comfortable with the media, they don't see it as a distraction, they don't see it as a pressure, they see it as an opportunity, we just want them to cherish the opportunity to better tell their story to enhance their brand at some point and also to give them some information about the environment of the games". By doing so, the COC wants to foster relationship between the athletes and the medias but most importantly they want the athletes' stories to be known and be featured in the media.

The 2016 Games were Roseline, Jennifer and Meaghan's third Olympic Games and therefore they were well prepared in terms of media preparation. While the Games were Pamela's

first, her experience with Canadian and International medias throughout her international diving career did help: “they are talented, they are well spoken, they are good ambassador for Diving” said the public relations and social media manager. When asked about media training given to the girls one sponsor said : “They got briefed but they didn’t really need media training because they were really good and had a lot of experience in front of the camera but they did need proper briefing which is normal”

By adding the human side of the story to the athletes, Diving Canada was able to bring more breath and depth to the FAB_IV. Added to the ability of the athlete to give great interviews these two elements strengthen the FAB_IV brand through the medias.

Establishing Relationships and Fostering Communication Between Stakeholders

The fourth main theme emerging from the data analysis is related to the relationship between all stakeholders involved in the FAB_IV program. Throughout the interviews, stakeholder mentioned the importance of relationship between them while also attributing good relationship as a key factor of the success behind the FAB_IV program. Relationship based on trust, good communication between stakeholders in order to minimize the distraction on athletes performance, good relationships amongst the stakeholder and fostering relationship through social media are all elements that co-created the FAB_IV program.

Trust. One word that was mentioned over and over again when talking about the relationship between Diving Canada, the athlete’s agent, the athletes and their parents was the notion of trust. Trust between all these stakeholders was important because one of the unique aspect of the FAB_IV concept was the fact that all four athletes were represented by the same agent. This

person's company was also Diving Canada's marketing agency. The situation is best explained by the athletes' agent :

I have a crazy idea here why don't you come on board with my agency, I'll re-present all four of you and I am representing the Federation as well, ok, and we'll work together on an overall strategic plan that will take us to the PanAm Games and onto Rio. So they needed to wrap their heads around how can he and his company represent us and the Federation at the same time. And really what it came down to and it's fundamentally this, it's trust. Trust between the athletes and the company and myself and trust between the athletes and the Federation.

Even though this situation could have been problematic due to possible conflict of interest, all stakeholders involved agreed it was beneficial for all of them. The concept of trust was also highlighted by Diving Canada's COO when she mentioned that “ we had already a fair amount of trust with the athletes so the Fab_IV and we had a good relationship with their parents and a good relationship with their coaches so we thought ok let's all get together and make it all work leading onto the Olympics.” One of the athlete also agreed by saying that : “the trust was there, we had nothing to lose and it ended up being a very good idea.”

The main goal of having the same marketing agency representing the FAB_IV athletes and Diving Canada's events was to ensure that all communication and marketing strategies were aligned and working towards the same goals. The athletes' agent explained that his strategy was based in observing that

National Sports Organization and high profile athletes in a lot of cases those athletes have agents and those agents are representing the interest of these athletes and only the

interest of the athletes and at times those interest in terms of the use of their names and their image in the marketplace run counter to what the National Sports Federation might be doing in the market place with their properties including the national team as a whole.

The FAB_IV program ensured that the athletes' and Diving Canada's marketing efforts were aligned and reaching the same goals. The athletes' agent also explained that this program was beneficial for all parties within Diving Canada. While he was out there in the market place looking for opportunities, he was able to sell endorsement deals for the athletes while including Diving Canada's events as part of the same sponsorship package.

Diving Canada's COO explains her view and the reason why she thought it was a great strategy to have Diving Canada's marketing consultant also representing the athletes :

So he was the marketing director he has a lot of experience in his career being an athlete agent it just kind of made sense, it was kind of an ha ha moment, kind of a why not, because I don't know of any sport that has operated this way and I don't think sport can operate this way because he's known the girls since they were young, it's his specialization sports diving.

The FAB_IV was a great way for Diving Canada and its athletes to find sponsors and increase their market value. Trust amongst stakeholders was found to be an essential factor to the success of the program.

Communications Between Stakeholders to Minimize Distractions. The number one priority for the athletes, the coaches, Diving Canada, the agent, the COC, the sponsors and the media was the athletes' performance at the Games and the competitions leading to the Olympics.

Each FAB_IV athlete were strong podium candidates at the 2016 Rio Olympics. Stakeholders were aware that during the in the final preparation for and during the Olympics, the athletes needed to focus on their performance and nothing else : “ when they arrived in Rio there wasn’t a lot of media things that would be done because the girls were in their bubble because they needed to focus on performance. Accordingly, one of Diving Canada COO’s main goals for the 2016 Olympics was : “to have a perfect Olympic to have way more control over the athlete schedule and way more communication between the technical side and the marketing side. Having more control over the schedule was important in order to make sure that photoshoot, interviews, meeting with sponsors or anything related to marketing and communication would interfere as little as possible with the trainmen schedule. Another important element was to have everybody on the same page”. She explained that wasted time and distraction were affecting performances and the ultimate goal is performance.

When she asked the coaches if they felt the FAB_IV program was a distraction they said : “yes, but every time there was a conflict in scheduling we were able to work it out and everyone knew who to talk to and where to work it out”. This was a crucial aspect, because coaches only focus on performance and most of them view the promotion and marketing activities as distractions. However, for Diving Canada’s COO, having the coaches agree ahead of time to the marketing program was key to its success.

Within a sports organization, different stakeholders might have different goals and different needs depending on their roles. Therefore, it is important that marketing and communication strategies encompasses needs and goals of everyone involved, including people on the technical side of the sports.

A member of the COC's communications team explained that Diving Canada really understand the importance of media compared to many federations who view the media only as a distraction. He explains how Diving Canada: "sees it as an opportunity, the media, the publicity, the sponsorship and all, they should be seen as an opportunity, so I think Diving has been really progressive. Their athletes are bigger figures in the public eye because they're always out and they are good at promoting their athletes".

The concept of having Diving Canada's marketing director also representing the athletes was a first for Diving Canada. While some details had to be ironed out, Diving Canada's COO mentioned that "It was the best communication and relationship between the technical side and the promotion and marketing side of the operation in any Olympics that I've had". The Marketing Director explains that : " a key of this program was to be able to protect the athletes from distractions. In other words, you know anything that was coming in, outside requests or sponsors or whatever, they would have to go through me and I'm most concern about performance at that stage." The whole idea was making sure that the athletes were focused on their competition and that they weren't worried about media coverage or delivering sponsor benefits. One of the athletes also talked about how this program contributed to their performance : "The fact that we were now tied as a group it took some pressure off our shoulders, so representing Canada as a group instead of ourselves representing Canada".

By focusing primarily on performance while giving attention to the media, social media and sponsors, Diving Canada was able to make sure their athletes were focused on their diving events while keeping the marketing and communication objectives in mind.

Good Relationship Between Stakeholders. The brand strategy to extend the athletes out of the sports pages and into the lifestyle segment was successful mostly because of who the athletes were as individuals as well as their personal interests in this segment. The four women are friends outside the pool and according to the public relations and social media manager of Diving Canada it was the foundation on which the brand strategy was built : “they were friends, they were close, they were getting along very well”. One sponsor added that the relationship between the girls was key in deciding to sponsor all four athletes: “Their moms are girlfriends too and the girls are girlfriends on the weekend. So, it really made sense and it made it much more easier to be personal and inclusive of the four all the time.” Ultimately it also contributed to theirs mothers being part of the Procter and Gamble ‘Thank You Mom!’ Campaign.

Diving Canada’s relationships with the stakeholders involved with the FAB_IV program were also very good. In fact, brand co-creation is often attributed to the relationship performance between stakeholders and the focal organization (Jones, 2005). Diving COO said that since after the London Olympics “it became a much more cooperative approach between the COC and most sports Federations, so we have a really good relationship with them now.”

In addition to having good relationships with the COC, one sponsor explained why she enjoyed working with Diving Canada and the athletes’ agent : “ they’ve been very collaborative, and fun to work with.” Another sponsor who began working with Diving Canada a few months after signing a sponsorship agreement with the FAB_IV mentioned that : “Everyone already had a great appreciation for the brand and they already had a really good respect for each other, so it wasn’t challenging to come in and to try and build that. It was already developed.”. Respectively, the public relation and social media manager of Diving Canada explained that the relationship

between the athletes and the sponsors are crucial for the sponsorship agreement to work smoothly :

If I can say to reinforce the relationship they have with the sponsored athlete so it was often "guys, we're gonna post a congratulations message on our twitter next Monday can you just give a heads up to the girls or can you retweet on your own channels" the sponsors were really fantastic because they would be sending reminders. I think having a good relationship with the athletes and the sponsors is really important in those situation

Supporting the importance of good relationship between the sponsor and the athletes, one sponsor explained her view on the subject :

For sport marketing I would say that my one piece of advice would be that people take the time to know the agents and to know the athletes and their families and their stories and care about that relationship and it will make a world of difference and in the negotiation and what the athlete will be willing to deliver over-and-above.

A few months after the Rio Olympic Games, Diving Canada's COO did a Webinar with various sports organizations presenting the FAB_IV program. One representative of a National Sport Association mentioned to her : "they loved the program, but they say they could never do it because they're not big enough and they don't have the same relationship with their athletes that you need to have".

The quality of the relationships Diving Canada had with its athletes, sponsors and the COC as well as the relationship between the sponsors and the athletes themselves were important factors in co-creating the FAB_IV subbrand. However, relationships amongst stakeholders are not only built over time, but mainly built over common projects, shared interests and common

goals. Therefore, even though Diving Canada was fortunate enough to have these strong relationships already in place, other NSOs who don't have relationships as strong shouldn't completely disregard opportunities brought by a branding strategy similar to the FAB_IV program brand strategy.

Fostering Relationship through Social Media. The 2016 Olympics brought the social media experience to a whole new level, one athlete explained that : “ It was funny to see the difference, Instagram started around 2011-2012 so it was not as big as it's now. Beijing forget it they had no Twitter or Instagram. There was Myspace but it was a little boring. I remember before Twitter was a little more popular, social media improved so much in four years.”

Regardless of the reason why a brand is using social media, the information the brands publishes on social media must be relevant to the consumer in order for the consumer to engage with it (Schmitt, 2012). Scholars have identified that online fans expect and demand information about athletes' personal lives on social media (Frederick, Lim, Clavio, Pedersen, & Burch, 2014; Pegoraro, 2010). The ‘Thank You Mom’ marketing campaign, which was previously researched and classified as a real success both because of its concept and its integrated approach (Berkowitz, 2012) allowed fans to know a little bit more about the girls and their mom personal lives.

Also, through Facebook and Instagram profiles, the four athletes gave their audience information about who they were and what they liked. Social media creates an online proximity between fans and athletes, especially for the sport figure who uses social media to foster interaction and leverage engagement and brand value (Tiago, 2016).

One of the reasons Diving Canada wasn't able to create a community with the FAB_IV accounts on social media may have been due to its lack of interaction with fans on their social

media profile. The amount of post were insufficient on all platforms except, maybe, on Twitter. However, even if Twitter was used more frequently, Diving Canada wasn't creating new content and were merely retweeting other stakeholders' Tweet through the FAB_IV account. Maintaining a social presence across social media should be a priority for brand and they should create fresh and frequent content (Ling et al., 2004).

Adding to the lack of interactions with the fans and the online community, one athlete mentioned that : "I don't answer to comments. Sometimes I put picture saying thank you for all the messages, but I don't answer because I'm not going to answer to everybody, but I read everything and it's really appreciated." Social media innovations have changed the traditional methods of fan-athlete interaction while redefining celebrity athlete's roles (Lebel & Danylchuk, 2012). Fans can, when the profile allows it, direct message to athletes in order to communicate directly with them in private. However, one of the FAB_IV athlete mentioned that on social media "my things are public, but I cannot receive messages" meaning that fans can't contact her privately.

Answering every single comment on each publications or responding to every single direct message would be a tedious task and not necessarily what his expected when talking about interacting with the audience. Nonetheless, fostering consumer engagement contributes to important brand outcomes such as brand equity and loyalty (Ashley & Tuten, 2014) and therefore, when possible, the athlete should reply to or like a few comments. Kehrberg (2014) explain that to be successful online, the celebrity must appear to be available for a 'Follow', a comment or 'Retweet'. The term 'appear' is important because it means that the person or the brand using social media doesn't need to be available or to respond to every single interaction however, they need to interact enough in order to appear available.

According to Hambrick and Mahoney (2011), promotional tweets, pictures and statuses need to be intertwined with more personal, behind the scene tweets and especially create and foster interaction with fans, which may indirectly influence their interest in his product endorsements. Followers don't want products, businesses and ads all over their Facebook, Instagram or Twitter feed, however they still want to know the products the athletes or the celebrity uses (Ballouli & Hutchinson, 2010). Talking about sponsorship leveraging on social media the public relations and social media manager explained that : "Whenever you are interacting with sponsors on social media, it's still really need to remain natural and organic. If it's fake the follower will probably stop following you because they will feel that it's just publicity rather than sharing your personal experience." As such, Pronschinske, Groza, and Walker (2012) show that the best way to positively influence the number of followers or like on social media is to interact with fans or by being engaged in discussion with them. Celebrity athletes must offer a mix of tweets from different categories which not only keeps followers interested and grows the fan base, but also provides an excellent tool for promoting sponsors (Hambrick et al., 2010; Pegoraro, 2010). One athlete explained that " Sometimes I ask people to take picture of me when I train, but sometimes I will take a selfie, so it really depends. If we are going to a competition we would take a picture of all of us and I would put the picture with the hashtag #FABIV. We post a lot of pictures, the four girls together from all around the world."

Today, marketers must focus not only on capturing consumer attention but also holding their attention via engagement (Hanna, Rohm, & Crittenden, 2011). Adding an entertainment component to social communications can facilitate a mutually beneficial relationship with customers. However, their fast-paced lives, travel arrangements, training schedules, and the need to

be completely focused while competing makes it difficult for them to use social media platform consistently in order to keep their publics entertained.

The branding strategy of putting them as more than athletes was perfect for traditional media but this strategy wasn't executed as efficiently on social media. People wanted to know the behind the scene but the athletes were not equipped nor did they have the time to broadcast their behind the scene, take a snap chat a few minutes before their dive, or post of picture of the meal they had hours before their Olympic diving event. On social media, people want to see the rest first and the athletes second whereas the FAB_IV were offering the athletes' first lifestyle second.

Discussion

This case study of Diving Canada's subbrand, the FAB_IV, highlighted four main themes identified as brand strategies and implementation, sponsorship and sponsorship activation, media interest and stakeholder's relationship. Each themes presented valuable information and insights applicable to co-creation notions. The following section situate the findings of this case study within the sport marketing, communication and management literatures. It also discusses the contributions made and the limitations and questions raised by the findings.

The purpose of this exploratory case study on the FAB_IV subbrand was to understand the creation of a team brand with four individual elite athletes and how the stakeholders involved used social media to co-create the brand. Previous research findings have demonstrate the need to improve the understanding of value co-creation in sport management (Woratschek et al., 2014), as well as deepening the overall management literature (Ramaswamy, 2011). In order for managers to apply this concept and adapt it to their reality, researchers needed to investigate

business practices that could lead to brand co-creation (Merz et al., 2009; Payne et al., 2009) and to value co-creation (Gronroos & Ravald, 2010; Jones, 2005; McColl-Kennedy et al., 2012; Rosser et al., 2012).

The intent of this case study was to research in-depth the FAB_IV subbrand and not to generalize the findings to all athletes, NSFs or other sports organization. However, some elements and findings still bring insightful and valuable information in terms of social media strategies and usage as well as depending the knowledge regarding athletes' brand whether on social media or outside social media.

As previously mentioned, the theme of establishing relationships' main focus was the notion of trust. The trust that was already established between the athletes and their agent, who was also representing the NSF for whom they compete, the trust present between the sponsor and everyone involved in the sponsorship agreement and trust that the time and energy put into launching and leveraging the FAB_IV concept would be beneficial.

The notion of trust, which was a central concern for Diving Canada was, according to them, one of the major reason why the FAB_IV concept was able to be implemented in the first place. Accordingly, months after the Rio Olympics, when Diving Canada's COO, presented the concept and strategy behind the FAB_IV program to other NSF's, the other NSF's felt that regardless of the success Diving Canada had with its program it was not something they could put into places mainly because their relationships with their stakeholders weren't as strong. Although trust must be present and is important in business relations amongst stakeholders (Rotter, 1967; Altman and Taylor, 1973; Dwyer & LaGace, 1986; Larzelere & Huston, 1980; Rotter, 1971; Morgan & Hunt, 1994), solely using trust as the factor determining if such a program would

work for other NSF is limiting the outreach along with the additional opportunities and benefits a program like the FAB_IV can bring to a sports organization and its stakeholders.

As mentioned by the athletes' agent and Diving Canada's marketing consultant, too often the athletes sponsorship agreements or marketing actions in the market place and the ones of the NSOs run counter to each other or not in the same direction. Therefore, instead of fully leveraging the organizations, the events, the athletes and the sport by aligning their objectives, strategies and marketing efforts, they end up diluting their actions and ultimately their results. Diving Canada, through the help of a marketing consultant, made sure that every single marketing and communication effort were aiming in the same direction. This allowed the sport federation, the FAB_IV as a group and the athletes individually to obtain more sponsorship agreement, more visibility and ultimately benefiting each stakeholders involved in the FAB_IV subbrand co-creation. Diving Canada feared this relationship could damage their image if it was seen as a conflict of interest but it ended-up being one of their strategy's biggest asset.

Furthermore, even if Diving Canada and the FAB_IV athletes were represented by the same agent, the idea behind such a strategy is not necessarily to have the same person in charge of both the marketing for the NSF and its athletes, but to put into place a marketing strategy that encompasses both the needs of the sport organization and of the athletes.

As such, sports organization of all type can implement co-branding strategies or initiatives with their stakeholders. Such co-branding efforts can provide immense strategic value to all parties Frederick and Patil (2010) found, in a New-Zealand sports study, five key benefits of co-branding strategies : “dimensions improvement, increase media attention, enhancement of the firm's profile, and increase in overall sales and popularity”. Co-branding can therefore be seen

as contributing to brand equity as well as being an element included in the brand co-creation process (Ferrand, Chappelet, & Séguin, 2012).

Diving Canada's branding strategy brought a deeper and broader side to the athletes; they showed the woman and the human behind the athlete. However, with this strategy, Diving Canada also played along what past research identified : when female athletes are covered by the media it is less for their athletic accomplishments and more for their off-the-field activities (Maley, 2012). Furthermore, athletes who play more 'feminine' sports or sports that shows their feminine attributes will often have their off-the-field life discussed more so than their on-the-field accomplishments (Fink, 2013). Without being the purpose of this research, this exemplifies the need for future research to study the lack of media attention given to female athletes as well as the stereotype that exists for these individuals. The fan perspective on this matter would also contribute to have a deeper understanding of this phenomenon.

However, that strategy didn't extend to social media, where the FAB_IV accounts were merely used for sharing other stakeholders publications and or sharing news related to diving events.

Diving Canada's social media strategy wasn't as thought out, planned and executed as it could have been neither as much as they would have liked it to be. Having an online and social media presence is not enough, just as regular communication and marketing strategies and activities have to be planned in order to be executed, so do social media activities.

Sheehan and Morrison (2009) identified four social media challenges that brand marketers face which are in direct alignment with the social media challenges Diving Canada faced : “(1) the challenge to effectively use social media, (2) the challenge to grow marketers with cre-

ative vision, (3) the challenge to involve consumers in telling their own stories, and (4) the challenge to reinvent the mass media model.”

Using Social Media Effectively

The first main challenge Diving Canada encountered was to use social media effectively, both in terms of strategy and in terms of time management. Regarding the development and implementation of effective social media strategies, Killian and McManus (2015), identified four primary themes: “(1) the need for consistency and integration across all marketing communications, (2) the need for customization to allow the brand messaging to feel personally crafted for individual audiences of each platform, (3) the need for commitment to relevant platforms, and (4) the need of a marketing communications approach for the digital era for managers to respond, with caution, to consumer commentary in social media.” These four themes, crucial to building an effective social media strategy, are summarized as the 4 C’s of social media integration strategies: consistency, customization, commitment, and caution. Manager must integrate these four components in order to create a cohesive brand personality across each social platform they use (Killian & McManus, 2015).

Consistency. In other words, the brand needs to be consistent not only in terms of posting pictures, links, videos and posts regularly but also, they have to be consistent in what they publish, the way they publish it and in the tone they use (Killian & McManus, 2015). Diving Canada were consistent in what they posted : upcoming competitions, updates on what the athletes were doing inside and outside of the sports, updates on event results and congratulatory messages for their athletes. However they lacked consistency on the frequency with which they were providing their audience information on social media. Distinctively, the sponsors that were interviewed

for this research were well aware of the needs for consistency in their online presence; both mentioning they had a strategic plan along with a daily or monthly schedules for their social media accounts activities. As for the athletes, while post related to their sponsors were planned in order to meet their sponsorship agreement requirement, the vast majority of their post were spontaneous.

Social media sites, especially Facebook and Instagram work with algorithms in order to screen and filter what will appear in one's newsfeed and the priority in which the content, created by people they follow, will appear. Algorithm, are, amongst many other factors, based on the popularity of the post, the accounts the user interact frequently with, the time spent on an account and, of course, the algorithm is also based on how recent the posts are (buffer.com). Consistency is therefore of the utmost importance for brands who wants their content to show up in the feed of the people who like their page. Therefore, even if a user has liked or followed an account, it doesn't necessarily mean that content that was published will show up in the followers newsfeed.

Customization & Commitment.

Publishing content on a regular basis is not the only important aspect for a brand wanting to to maximized its social media activities however it is not enough. Along with being consistent, the have to make sure they are putting out the right content and are adapting it to the right market. In this specific case related to the FAB_IV , customization and commitment go together. Customization refers to creating content not only for the specific audience the post is trying to reach but is also adapted to the social media site in which it is posted. As for commitment, it refers to “a need to commit to both the platform and the audience engaging with the brand on the platform.” (Killian & McManus, 2015). It is easy to re-use, repost or share content however cre-

ating new and fresh content is what differentiate one page from another and it is what social media followers are looking for (Ling et al., 2004). Prior to creating a profile on a social platform, brand managers must understand the platform, its users and the type of conversation and relationship happening on the platform. (Killian & McManus, 2015). A Facebook profile that ends up being deleted, a Twitter account that didn't reach 600 followers and an Instagram account that was last used months prior to the Rio Olympics demonstrate a lack of commitment, from Diving Canada, to all of these platforms.

Contrastingly, the athletes, because they created customized content, used their accounts with consistency and committed to certain platforms were able to reap the benefits on their personal accounts, especially in terms of gaining significant amounts of followers. For instance, Jennifer Abel used with consistency and added fresh, new and interesting content to her Facebook, Instagram and Twitter accounts which brought her total following to over 100K followers. Pamela Ware has left Facebook and Twitter in order to use Instagram on a regular basis by publishing new content and has gone from under 1000 followers at the beginning of August 2016 to over 10K followers in January of 2017. As for Roseline Filion, she was never active on Facebook but really committed to Instagram by publishing new material almost every day, reaching over 15K followers. Before retiring, she was using Twitter regularly, however since fall 2016, she Tweets once or twice a month mainly to Retweet Tweets, articles, information, events featuring her, diving or other members of the FAB_IV. With over 20K followers, Twitter is still the platform where Roseline has the most followers. As for Meaghan Benfeito, she has less than 500 likes on Facebook, where she posts only once or twice a month. She has chosen to focus on In-

stagram (18K followers) and Twitter (28K followers) where she publishes two to three times per week, reaching close to 50K followers between the two social media platforms.

Caution.

Every stakeholders interviews were well aware of the negative comments or feedback that can happen on social media. For instance, one of the athletes explained that her direct messages options were turned off on all her social media accounts because she didn't want to be contacted directly. For athletes who's primary focus is to train, perform well in competition and ultimately win medals, direct messaging are a viable option if only because of the time consuming aspect of having to read and/or respond to them. Also, one athletes stated that she wasn't answering to any of the comment made on her posts because she wouldn't be able to answer to everybody. While that might seems fair and respectful, it doesn't match how the algorithm works. Without needing to answer to every single comments, adding a few thank you along the post or answering to some comments will create, in the followers mind, the possibility of their comments being answered to. Whereas never answering to any comments, will along the way diminish the number of comments being made, which will, according to the social media platform algorithm diminish the visibility of the post.

Involve Audience in Telling Their Own Stories

Many online users are not satisfied with merely reading and viewing or listening to content; rather, they want to create content or to interact with content by adding to it or repurposing it for new and different uses (Deuze, 2006). For instance, Proctor and Gamble "Thank You Mom" campaign is a perfect example where the audience were asked to contribute stories (i.e., user-generated content) on the role of mothers in nurturing child athletes. These stories were

sought out and then shared in social channels, but ultimately also became the basis for a series of commercials that were broadcasted on television as well as online (Berkowitz, 2012). Without necessarily having to go as far as Proctor and Gamble went when they first launched their “Thank You Mom” campaign, a brand’s success on social media platforms is in part influenced by having its audience share their stories and co-create content and therefore must be intertwined in the brands social media strategies.

Grow Marketers with Creative Vision

The concept of growing marketers with a creative vision is based on the idea of generating new ideas in a strategic setting or, in other word, putting forward new ideas, new concepts, new ways of doing thing with strategies and planning (Sheehan & Morrison, 2009).

Diving Canada attributed their lack of social media presence due to a lack of time and resources. However, what was more important than time and resources was a strategy and an action plan. The marketing and communication director, the athletes agent and marketing consultant, the FAB_IV athletes themselves and Diving Canada needed a well define social media strategy in order to be efficient and effective in their day to day social media activities.

Diving Canada’s traditional media strategies were well thought out, planned and executed which contributed to increasing the overall FAB_IV brand equity.

However, what this research brings forward is the need for sports organizations, agents and athletes to also have a strategy in place related to social media. Creating social media accounts on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram and posting information and pictures here and there is not enough. This might be even more important for this subbrand that had a lifespan of just

over a year. Launched in July 2015, the FAB_IV would have benefited of a strong online presence until its 'end' shortly after the 2016 Rio Olympics.

As mentioned earlier, on social media nothing beats fresh content, innovation and content that fosters relationship with the community. In order to be able to give that to its audience, a brand needs to find creative and appealing ways and distance itself from the easiness of simply sharing or reposting content.

Just as they did with traditional media, Diving Canada would have benefited from establishing a strong social media strategy as well as creating a bank of pictures ready to be shared on social media.

Reinvent the mass media model

In terms of branding strategy, the main idea was not to put diving as a sport or the athletes into the sport section of the newspaper and compete with major sports like hockey, football and baseball, but to use the athletes as everyday girls who have passions and a life outside of the sport. That strategy was well implemented on traditional media and well received by news outlets and journalists, however that branding strategy wasn't transferred entirely to social medias, not from Diving Canada's or from the FAB_IV accounts anyways. Yet, this strategy was a perfect fit for social media platforms, it was just not used efficiently.

Nevertheless, traditional media strategies cannot just be copy pasted to become social media strategies. Before the social media era, mass media communication were unilateral channels where the brand could 'talk to' its audience (Hoffman & Novak, 1996). According to Sheehan and Morrison (2009), since the audience is 'captive' one main advantage mass media brings, is providing brands with the opportunity for strong branding messages.

Nonetheless, in terms of marketing and communication strategies, Diving Canada stayed with what they knew and what they were good at; leveraging branding strategies and sponsorship activation strategies with traditional media. Their earlier communication and marketing successes paved the way for the traditional media strategies they implemented. The strategies they used with previous athletes and with the athletes of the FAB_IV prior to creating the group were at the basis of their marketing strategy to co-create the FAB_IV subbrand. Integrating social media into a branding strategy allows the sport organization to reach the same audience as mass media would but in a more personalized way (Simmons 2007). Therefore it is important that the content being published on social media is tailored for the audience as well as for the social media platform on which it is shared.

Social media platforms permit athletes and sports organization to connect directly with the audience they are trying to reach without the media filter between the two of them. Instead of having the athletes answering questions during a talk show or in a magazine interview, social media creates places where the athletes themselves can share behind the scenes, unique trait of their personality or personal lives or anything related to what they do on a daily basis or special events they attend. Not only does it permit athletes to share directly with their fans it also permits sports organization, such as Diving Canada, sponsors and ultimately any stakeholder involved to have a faster and deeper understanding of the audience with which the athletes are interacting.

However, the popularity of social media has resulted in consumers expecting the brand to interact with them “in a medium where the consumer controls every aspect of the conversation: the timing, the channel, and the content” (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Sports organizations and athletes who creates accounts on social media, need to engage with their fans if they want to use

theses platform to increase their brand awareness and brand value. Watkins (2014) even goes as far as to mention that the number one priority for sports brand on social media should be : “to create meaningful associations with fans that connect with their core values and keep them involved”. This was a major downfall from Diving Canada’s and the FAB_IV athletes.

In summary, as the social network phenomenon continues to evolve, sports organizations can strengthen their brand value by adopting an active digital presence and promoting sports figures’ activity on diverse social media sites (Tiago, 2016).

Last, it is important to discuss the limitation of this study. The interviews and especially the stakeholders that weren’t interviewed limited the reach and the findings of this study. Whereas the initial plan was to interview journalists and member of the media, the attempts to contact members of the media were unsuccessful. Gaining insights and perspective related to the research questions from members of the press would have possibly corroborated or contradicted what other stakeholders thought media liked or thought about the FAB_IV brand. However, Canadian sports reporters, journalists and broadcasters all have a long history of working with the COC, with Diving Canada and the athletes.

Interviews were only made with sponsors who went on to sponsor all four athletes, but it would have been interesting to know why they’ve chosen not to sponsor the other athletes. Accordingly, one sponsor who loved the concept and who decided to sponsor all the FAB_IV athletes mentioned that it was also logistically easier to sponsor all four athletes since they are always together anyways. However, knowing why a sponsor decided to go with only one or two of the four athletes, in a world where sponsors are demanding exclusivity, would have also brought additional and valuable information to this research.

Moreover, fans and social media users weren't interviewed during this research. While the study wasn't trying to understand social media users or fans behaviour on social media, interviewing them would have permitted for a broader understanding of the case study at hand.

Conclusion

In summary, this case study contributes to the existing knowledge of brand and value co-creation in a sport context by answering the research questions. It provides professionals with a list of recommendations towards co-creation practices and effective social media usage. Furthermore, researchers are also given possible avenues for future research related to social media and/or brand co-creation whether inside or outside the sport management field.

The FAB_IV, because of their close relationship with Diving Canada were identified as a subbrand of Diving Canada instead of a brand in itself. Moreover, the findings indicated that brand implementation, sponsorship activation, media interest and relationships were the main aspects that contributed to the co-creation of the FAB_IV subbrand.

Encompassing both a content analysis of the social media accounts as well as a thematic analysis of the interviews of all stakeholders involved brought a deeper understanding of the case study at hand. This case study looked, at the branding strategy of this subbrand with a short life-span. The data retrieved during the interview permitted a better understanding of the way the stakeholders handled all aspects related to their social media accounts. More importantly, by collecting publications related to the FAB_IV on the various social media platforms allowed for a clear distinction between what the stakeholders intents were and what was actually done.

The data emphasizes ways in which Diving Canada and their stakeholders co-created the FAB_IV subbrand. By choosing a case study approach, it allowed the researcher to really look into this particular situation. It also allowed for the majority of the stakeholders involved in the brand creation process to be included which provided a more in-depth understanding of the co-creation practices as well as social media strategies that were used.

Specifically regarding social media, the research showed that the FAB_IV online presence, or lack thereof, cannot be viewed as a brand co-creation contributor. In fact, the analysis showed that in order to use social media as a brand co-creation tool, organizations and athletes need to have a strategy in place, use them with consistency and be creative in what they publish. Additionally, fostering relationships with followers was identified as a key contributor of building a brand on social media.

Although the intent was not to provide generalizable conclusions related to brand and value co-creation in a sport management context, practitioners are encouraged to think about ways to adapt the findings of this research to their own realities. Accordingly, sports team, athletes, NSO's and other sports organization can adapt their branding strategies and social media practices in order to find new or better co-creation opportunities.

Researchers and future researches should focus on organizations who, along with their stakeholders, are using social media as the main tool to co-create their brand. Moreover, having the fan or follower perspective, when doing a research pertaining to brand and value co-creation on social media, would also be a possible avenue for future researches. In a world where social media platforms are constantly evolving, other platforms such as Snapchat and Pinterest may also need to be studied in order to fully understand the ways brands are built and co-created on

social media and to understand the way these social media platforms are used to co-create brands.

In conclusion, online or offline, fostering relationships proved to be an important factor in the process of brand co-creation. This study clearly demonstrates that creating a subbrand in a sports management context can be both beneficial for the organization, the athletes and other stakeholders involved.

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APPENDIX A : Interview Guides (English)

Interview Guide for Stakeholders within Diving Plongeon Canada - English

1. What is your background in sport and sport management? What is your role within Diving Canada? Since when are you part of the organization?
2. From a marketing stand point, what do you see as strength and weaknesses in the marketing of Diving Canada? What would you say are the main marketing threats and opportunities for Diving Canada?
3. Can you explain how the FAB_IV idea came about and how it evolved over the last couple of years?
4. What were the main objectives behind the FAB_IV?
5. When you came out with this idea, what were the main challenges in creating the brand? How did you go about promoting it?
6. Who are the main stakeholders who are helping you leveraging the FAB_IV brand?
7. What do you think are the main benefits of the FAB_IV for Diving Canada?
8. Has the FAB_IV created new opportunities for Diving Canada?
9. How did Diving Canada supported the FAB_IV brand leading up to and during the Rio Olympics?
10. In term of sponsorship deals, were there any significant changes once the FAB_IV brand was created? What was your sponsorship strategy?
11. In term of media coverage and interview request, did you see a difference for Diving Canada once the FAB_IV brand was announced? Is there a difference between the FAB_IV and other divers who were competing in the Olympics? Why do think that is?

12. Did you have a social media strategy?
13. How did you use social media to promote/talk about the FAB_IV? Did it change the way you use social media to promote Diving Canada, its sponsors and its athletes? Who was responsible for the social media presence? How were the athletes involved in this strategy? Did they get social media training or guidelines?
14. What's the next steps for the FAB_IV? Are you thinking of doing something similar with other athletes?
15. Any other comments or information you would like to add?

Guide d'entrevue pour les parties prenante faisant partie de Plongeon Canada - Français

1. Parlez moi de vos expériences dans le domaine du sport et de l'administration du sport? Quel est votre rôle à Plongeon Canada? Depuis quand faites-vous parti de l'organization?
2. Selon vous, du point de vu marketing, quelles sont les forces et les faiblesses de Plongeon Canada? Selon vous quelques sont les menaces et les opportunités pour Plongeon Canada?
3. Parlez moi de l'histoire derrière l'idée du FAB_IV et comment cela a évolué dans les dernières années?
4. Quels sont les objectifs principaux derrière la création du FAB_IV?
5. Quels ont été les défis à mettre sur pied la marque des FAB_IV ? Comment en avez-vous fait la promotion?
6. Qui sont les principales parties prenantes qui vous ont aidé à faire la promotion de la marque FAB_IV?
7. Selon vous, quels sont les avantages que le FAB_IV apporte à Plongeon Canada?
8. Est-ce que le FAB_IV a créé de nouvelles opportunités pour Plongeon Canada?
9. Comment Plongeon Canada a-t'il supporté le FAB_IV de sa création jusqu'aux Olympiques de Rio et pendant les Olympiques?
10. En lien avec les commandites, avez-vous vu une différence depuis que la marque FAB_IV a été créée? Quelle a été votre stratégie de commandite?
11. En terme de couverture médiatique et de demandes d'entrevue, avez-vous vu une différence depuis que vous avez annoncé la création du FAB_IV? Avez-vous une perçu une différence ? Pourquoi pensez-vous cela?
12. Aviez-vous une stratégie pour les médias sociaux pour faire la promotion du FAB_IV?

13. De quelle manière avez-vous utilisé les médias sociaux pour faire la promotion ou parler du FAB_IV? Est-ce que ça a changé ou influencer la façon dont vous avez utilisé les médias sociaux pour faire la promotion de Plongeon Canada, vos athlètes ou vos commanditaires? Qui est responsable des comptes de médias sociaux? Comment les athlètes ont-elles été impliquées dans cette stratégie? Ont-elles eu des formations sur les médias sociaux ou des règles à suivre?
14. Quelle est la prochaine étape pour le FAB_IV? Pensez-vous à utiliser une stratégie similaire avec d'autres athlètes?
15. Avez d'autres commentaires ou informations que vous jugez pertinent d'ajouter?

Interview Guide for External Stakeholders - English

1. What is your role within your organization? Since when are you part of the organization?

What is your background? Do you have any sports background?
2. What is your relationship with Diving Canada and/or it's athletes?
3. What value do you see in associated yourself with Diving Canada and/or it's athletes?
4. How did Diving Canada present you the FAB_IV idea and what did you think? What opportunity did you see and how did you connect with it?
5. How did your organization support/promote/leverage the FAB_IV brand before and during the Olympics?
6. Did you see added value in the FAB_IV during the Olympics?
7. What social media platforms do you use to promote your brand? Did you use the same platforms to promote the FAB_IV?
8. Did you have a social media strategy in place to promote/leverage/talk about the FAB_IV?
9. Who was responsible for the social media presence?
10. Did athletes have guidelines to follow in terms of social media?
11. Now that the Olympics are over, did you think that it was a good strategy for Diving?
12. Do you think other sports organization should use a similar brand strategy?
13. Any other comments or information you would like to add?

Guide d'entrevue pour les parties prenantes externes - Français

1. Quel est votre rôle au sein de votre organisation? Depuis quand en faites-vous partis? Quel est votre experience (background)? Quels sont vos experience en lien avec le sport?
2. Quel est votre lien avec Plongeon Canada et ses athlètes?
3. Quelle valeur avez-vous vu afin de vous associer à Plongeon Canada et ses athlètes?
4. De quelle façon est-ce que Plongeon Canada vous a présenté le FAB_IV et quelle a été votre réaction initiale? Quelles sont les opportunités que vous avez-vues?
5. Comment votre organization a-t'elle supporté/appuyé la marque du FAB_IV avant et pendant les Olympiques?
6. Avez-vous vu de la valeur ajoutée quant aux FAB_IV pendant les Olympics?
7. Quels médias sociaux utilisez-vous pour faire la promotion de votre marque/organization?
Avez-vous utilisé les mêmes pour le FAB_IV?
8. Aviez-vous une stratégie pour les médias sociaux pour faire la promotion du FAB_IV?
9. Qui est responsable des comptes de médias sociaux?
10. Est-ce que les athlètes avaient des règles à suivre en terme de médias sociaux?
11. Maintenant que les Olympiques sont terminés, pensez-vous que c'était une stratégie efficace pour Plongeon Canada?
12. Pensez-vous que d'autres organisations devraient utiliser une stratégie de marque similaire?
13. Avez d'autres commentaires ou informations que vous jugez pertinent d'ajouter?

APPENDIX B : ETHICS APPROVAL NOTICE

File Number: H08-16-18

Date (mm/dd/yyyy): 09/08/2016



Université d'Ottawa
Bureau d'éthique et d'intégrité de la recherche

University of Ottawa
Office of Research Ethics and Integrity

Ethics Approval Notice **Health Sciences and Science REB**

Principal Investigator / Supervisor / Co-investigator(s) / Student(s)

<u>First Name</u>	<u>Last Name</u>	<u>Affiliation</u>	<u>Role</u>
Benoit	Séguin	Health Sciences / Human Kinetics	Supervisor
Stephany	Brizay	Health Sciences / Human Kinetics	Student Researcher

File Number: H08-16-18

Type of Project: Master's Thesis

Title: Co-Creation of a Team Brand with Individual Athletes on Social Media: An Exploratory Case Study of the FAB_IV

Approval Date (mm/dd/yyyy)	Expiry Date (mm/dd/yyyy)	Approval Type
09/08/2016	09/07/2017	Approved

Special Conditions / Comments:
N/A

550, rue Cumberland,
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550 Cumberland Street,
Ottawa, Ontario K1N 6N5 Canada

www.recherche.uottawa.ca/deontologie/ www.research.uottawa.ca/ethics/



Université d'Ottawa
Bureau d'éthique et d'intégrité de la recherche

University of Ottawa
Office of Research Ethics and Integrity

This is to confirm that the University of Ottawa Research Ethics Board identified above, which operates in accordance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement (2010) and other applicable laws and regulations in Ontario, has examined and approved the ethics application for the above named research project. Ethics approval is valid for the period indicated above and subject to the conditions listed in the section entitled "Special Conditions / Comments".

During the course of the project, the protocol may not be modified without prior written approval from the REB except when necessary to remove participants from immediate endangerment or when the modification(s) pertain to only administrative or logistical components of the project (e.g., change of telephone number). Investigators must also promptly alert the REB of any changes which increase the risk to participant(s), any changes which considerably affect the conduct of the project, all unanticipated and harmful events that occur, and new information that may negatively affect the conduct of the project and safety of the participant(s). Modifications to the project, including consent and recruitment documentation, should be submitted to the Ethics Office for approval using the "Modification to research project" form available at: <http://www.research.uottawa.ca/ethics/forms.html>

Please submit an annual report to the Ethics Office four weeks before the above-referenced expiry date to request a renewal of this ethics approval. To close the file, a final report must be submitted. These documents can be found at: <http://www.research.uottawa.ca/ethics/forms.html>

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the Ethics Office at [REDACTED] or by e-mail at: ethics@uOttawa.ca.

Signature:

[REDACTED]

Riana Marcotte
Protocol Officer for Ethics in Research
For Daniel Lagarec, Chair of the Health Sciences and Sciences REB

550, rue Cumberland,
Ottawa (Ontario) K1N 6N5 Canada

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www.recherche.uottawa.ca/deontologie/ www.research.uottawa.ca/ethics/

APPENDIX C : Letter of Intent



Université d'Ottawa | University of Ottawa

École des sciences de l'activité physique | School of Human Kinetics

125 rue Université | 125 University St.
Ottawa, Ontario, K1N 6N5

Cher/Chère [INSÉRER le nom du participant],

Mon nom est Stephany Brizay. Je suis un étudiante à la maîtrise à l'École des sciences de l'activité physique de l'Université d'Ottawa et je mène présentement un projet de recherche intitulé « Co-crédation d'image de marque avec quatre athlètes individuelles sur les médias sociaux : Étude de cas exploratoire des Fab_IV. » pour ma thèse de maîtrise. Cette recherche a pour but de comprendre comment les différentes parties prenantes ont utilisés les médias sociaux afin de co-crédation l'image de marque des Fab_IV. Pour ce faire, je mène une série d'entrevue avec les différents acteurs qui ont contribué à faire la promotion des Fab_IV sur les medias sociaux.

Je communique avec vous car vous avez contribué à la co-crédation de la marque des Fab_IV en un assurant, supervisant ou planifiant l'usage des médias sociaux pour votre organisation.

Chaque entrevue téléphonique prendra environ soixante minutes. Vous recevrez un pseudonyme pour conserver votre anonymat.

L'implication des participants est complètement volontaire et aucune compensation ne sera offerte. Par contre, les résultats de l'étude seront rendus disponibles aux participants pour utilisation dans leur organisation. Les participants seront choisis sur une base de premier arrivé, premier servi.

Les aspects relatifs à l'éthique de cette étude, faite indépendamment de votre organisation, sont approuvés par le Comité de déontologie de l'Université d'Ottawa (# à insérer). Si vous avez des questions, commentaires ou inquiétudes, veuillez communiquer avec le directeur de thèse du chercheur principal, le Prof. Benoit Séguin à [REDACTED] ou le Responsable de l'éthique en recherche, à ethics@uottawa.ca ou [REDACTED]

Pour participer aux entrevues, veuillez envoyer un courriel au chercheur principal mentionné ci-dessous.

Sincèrement,

Stephany Brizay [REDACTED]



Université d'Ottawa | University of Ottawa

École des sciences de l'activité physique | School of Human Kinetics

125 rue Université | 125 University St.
Ottawa, Ontario, K1N 6N5

Dear Potential Participant,

My name is Stephany Brizay and I am a Master student at the School of Human Kinetics at the University of Ottawa and I am conducting a research project titled "Co-Creation of a Team Brand with Individual Athletes on Social Media: An Exploratory Case Study of the FAB_IV". The purpose of this research is to understand how the various stakeholders use social media to leverage and co-create the Fab_IV brand. For this reason, I am conducting interviews with stakeholders who have taken part in leveraging the Fab_IV brand on social media.

I am contacting you because you contributed in co-creating the Fab_IV brand on social media either by supervising, planning or being responsible of the social media for your organization.

Each interview will take approximately sixty minutes and will be conducted. You will receive a pseudonym to preserve your anonymity.

Participants will not be compensated for their involvement in the study.

Results from the research will be made available to the participants. |

Participants will be chosen on a first come first serve basis.

The ethical aspects of this study have been approved by the Research Ethics Board at the University of Ottawa (REB #xxxxxxx). If you have questions, comments or concerns, please contact the Thesis Superviseur, Dr. Benoit Séguin [REDACTED] or the Protocol Officer for Ethics in Research at ethics@uottawa.ca or at [REDACTED]

To be interviewed for this research please send an email to the principal investigator mentioned below.

Regards,

Stephany Brizay [REDACTED]

APPENDIX D : Consent Form



Université d'Ottawa | University of Ottawa

École des sciences de l'activité physique | School of Human Kinetics

125 rue Université | 125 University St.
Ottawa, Ontario, K1N 6N5

Title of study: **Co-Creation of a Team Brand with Individual Athletes on Social Media:
An Exploratory Case Study of the Fab_IV**

You are invited to participate in a research study on the co-creation of the Fab_IV brand on social media conducted by Stephany Brizay from the School of Human Kinetics at the University of Ottawa, independent of your organization. The interview is part of the researcher's Master's Thesis, supervised by Dr. Benoit Séguin also from the School of Human Kinetics at the University of Ottawa.

Principal investigator : Stephany Brizay , [REDACTED]

Thesis supervisor: Dr. Benoit Séguin, [REDACTED]

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study is to understand how the various stakeholders use social media to leverage and co-create the Fab_IV brand.

PARTICIPATION

If you volunteer to participate in the interview process:

- You will be interviewed by the principal investigator one-on-one with no other persons present.
- Your name will not appear anywhere, but anonymity cannot be fully guaranteed
- You will be asked semi-structured questions; the interview is scheduled to last up to 60 minutes
- You consent to being audio recorded so that the principal investigator can transcribe and analyze information from the session.
- You may request to review your transcript, memos, or notes from your session prior to analysis.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

Risk associated with participation in this study will be no greater than what you would experience in your daily life. You will not be penalized by your employer should you choose not to participate or if you withdraw from the study after consenting.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS

Participants may benefit from this study as they gain greater knowledge about their organization and look introspectively at current social media practices. It is also a professional benefit to those individuals who work in the sport management industry to seek out best practices and an understanding of contemporary phenomena such as social media usage.

COMPENSATION

Participants will not be compensated for their involvement in the study.

CONFIDENTIALITY AND ANONYMITY

All information provided through the research process will be kept with the strictest confidence by the principal investigator. Only the principal investigator and the thesis advisor will have access to the data and data will be stored on the primary investigator's University of Ottawa secured network drive. Pseudonyms will be used and your specific role/position will not be reported, although the name of your organization will be identified. However, anonymity cannot be guaranteed as other national sport organizations may identify the participant in the reporting of the study.

FEEDBACK OF THE RESULTS OF THIS STUDY TO PARTICIPANTS

Results of the study will be published in the principal investigator's master's thesis and will be made available to the participants by accessing the University of Ottawa's thesis and dissertation repository. The principal investigator will make arrangements with any willing participant who wishes to view the results.

SUBSEQUENT USE OF DATA AND DATA RETENTION

Data from this study will be stored for a minimum period of five years on a secured University of Ottawa network drive accessible by the primary investigator and/or the thesis supervisor. Data may be used in subsequent studies, publications, and/or presentations. Your specific role/position or name will not be reported in future studies.

ACCEPTANCE

I, _____, hereby consent to participate in the above research study conducted by Stephany Brizay of the School of Human Kinetics and supervised by Dr. Benoit Séguin of the same affiliation.

Titre de l'étude: Co-crédation d'une image de marque avec quatre athlètes individuelles sur les médias sociaux : Étude de cas exploratoire des Fab_IV.

Vous êtes invités à participer à une étude indépendante de votre organisation sur la co-crédation de la marque des Fab_IV sur les médias sociaux menée par Stephany Brizay de l'École des sciences de l'activité physique à L'Université d'Ottawa. L'entrevue fait partie de la thèse de maitrise de la chercheure, dont le directeur de thèse est le Prof. Benoit Séguin également de l'École des sciences de l'activité physique à L'Université d'Ottawa.

Chercheure principale : Stephany Brizay [REDACTED]

Directeur de thèse : Prof. Benoit Séguin [REDACTED]

BUT DE L'ÉTUDE

Le but de cette étude est de comprendre comment les différentes parties prenantes ont utilisés les médias sociaux afin de co-crédier l'image de marque des Fab_IV.

PARTICIPATION

Si vous vous porter volontaire pour participer dans l'entrevue:

- Vous serez interviewé par le chercheur principal individuellement avec aucune autre personne présente.
- On vous demandera des questions semi-structurées; l'entrevue devrait durer un maximum de 60 minutes
- Vous consentez à être enregistré de manière audio pour le chercheur principal puisse transcrire et analyser l'information obtenue durant la session.
- Vous pouvez réviser votre transcription d'entrevue, mémos ou notes de votre session si vous le désirez.

RISQUES POTENTIELS ET INCONFORTS

Les risques associés à la participation dans cette étude ne sont pas plus grands que ceux que vous rencontrez tous les jours. Vous ne serez pas pénalisés par votre employeur si vous décider de ne pas participer ou si vous vous retirez de l'étude après avoir consenti.

BIENFAITS POTENTIELS POUR LES PARTICIPANTS

Les participants peuvent bénéficier de cette étude car ils auront une plus grande connaissance de la façon dont ils utilisent les médias sociaux. C'est aussi un avantage professionnel, pour ceux travaillant dans l'industrie de la gestion du sport, de rechercher les meilleures pratiques et de comprendre les phénomènes contemporains, tel que l'utilisation des médias sociaux.

COMPENSATION

Les participants ne seront pas compensés pour leur implication dans l'étude.

CONFIDENTIALITÉ ET ANONYMAT

Toute information obtenue à travers le processus de recherche sera gardée dans la plus stricte confidence par le chercheur principale. Seuls le chercheur principal et son directeur de thèse auront accès aux données et les données seront gardées sur le serveur sécurisé du chercheur principal à l'Université d'Ottawa. Des pseudonymes seront utilisés et votre rôle/poste ne seront pas rapportés, mais le nom de votre organisation sera identifiée. Par contre, l'anonymat ne peut être garanti car d'autres personnes oeuvrant dans votre domaine pourrait être en mesure d'identifier le participant lors du rapport de l'étude.

FEEDBACK DES RÉSULTATS DE CETTE ÉTUDE AUX PARTICIPANTS

Avant que l'étude soit publiée, vous pourrez consulter la transcription de l'entrevue à laquelle vous avez participé.

Les résultats de l'étude seront publiés dans la thèse de maîtrise du chercheur principal et seront rendus disponibles aux participants en accédant au dépôt des thèses de l'Université d'Ottawa. Le chercheur principal fera des arrangements avec les participants désirant voir les résultats.

UTILISATION SUBSÉQUENTE DES DONNÉES ET RÉTENTION DES DONNÉES

Les données de cette étude seront gardées pour un minimum de cinq ans sur le réseau sécurisé de l'Université d'Ottawa, accessible seulement par le chercheur principal et son directeur de thèse. Les données pourraient être utilisées dans des études, publications et/ou présentations subséquentes. Ni votre rôle/poste spécifique ni votre nom ne seront rapportés dans des études ultérieures.

ACCEPTATION

Je, _____, consent à participer dans l'étude mentionnée ci-haut menée par Stephany Brizay de l'École des sciences de l'activité physique et supervisée par Prof. Benoit Séguin de la même affiliation.

- ☐ J'accepte que mon nom et/ou mon poste soient mentionnés dans la recherche
- ☐ Je désire conserver mon anonymat tout en sachant que l'information que je divulguerais pourrait permettre à certaines personnes lisant l'étude de m'identifier.

Si vous avez des questions à propos de l'étude, vous pouvez communiquer avec le chercheur principal ou son directeur de thèse. Si vous avez des questions concernant la déontologie de cette étude, vous pouvez communiquer avec le Responsable de l'éthique en recherche, Pavillon Tabaret, 550 rue Cumberland, pièce 154, Ottawa, ON K1N 6N5

Courriel: ethics@uottawa.ca

Il y a deux copies de ce formulaire. Une copie est pour moi à garder.

Signature du participant

Date

Signature du chercheur

Date