

Integration of relationship marketing on social media by sports brands

How Adidas and Nike integrate relationship marketing in their Twitter marketing strategy?

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Abstract

This paper aims at exploring relationship marketing on social media by sports brands. While more and more brands establish their presence on social media, it is important to know what kind of strategies they implement in order to meet their goals. Sports brands advertise mainly through athletes who wear their clothes and shoes while they compete, that is why this study aims to see whether the relationship with the athletes is being capitalized on by connecting them to their fans. Establishing what strategies of integrating relationship marketing by sports brands has been accomplished through studying tweets of Adidas Tennis and Nike Tennis accounts. Tennis has been chosen as a single sport to study, as it allows to have a greater look at individual tennis player relationship with a brand and through the brand with their fans. This study has taken a qualitative approach and has involved creating initial and final coding categories of the tweets. In total 400 tweets were selected to analyze as a grounded theory research.

Conclusions have been reached that certain facets of relationship marketing are being utilized as marketing strategies, such as trust, engagement, commitment. Additionally, it became clear that using celebrity athletes for creating trust and engagement are a focal point of relationship marketing strategy on Twitter, and also what fans are coming to social media for.

Keywords: Relationship marketing, Twitter, social media, sports, sports marketing, tennis, Nike, Adidas, marketing

1. Introduction

The growth of social media influenced not only on how people communicate with each

other, but also on how they communicate with brands and organizations. The social media have created the opportunity for brands to develop and maintain a relationship with the customers, given that so many of them already have accounts on social networking sites. This aspect is especially important for the marketers who use relationship marketing in their marketing strategy, i.e. the efforts to build long lasting relationships with customers (Williams & Chinn, 2010) in their marketing strategy, because brands may employ social media as a strategy to maintaining the relationship with their customers.

Using social media to develop and sustain a relationship with a customer is linked with several challenges. While the social media help to empower and engage the audience, it also creates the expectation of having their voices heard and answered instantaneous (Abeza & O'Reilly, Reid, 2013). Moreover, as the communication has changed from one-to-many to many-to-many (Livingstone, 2004), whatever is being said online (including negative feedback) can be heard by all other people including the potential customers of the given brand.

While these opportunities and challenges present themselves to all brands that engage on social media platforms, sports brands enjoy special amount of attention, as more of sports organisations and athletes frequently embrace these tools (Abeza & O'Reilly, Reid, 2013). While it is hard to establish the size of the entire sports industry, sports events belong to the most watched televised events in history and generate considerable revenues. For instance, the 2012 London Olympics attracted 3.6 billion viewers, making it the most watched television event in the U.S. history (Kondolojy, 2012). Moreover, broadcasting rights to such events are being sold at rates such as \$900 million (Goldsmith, 2008). Additionally, in 2013 there were 17 athletes in Forbes' most powerful celebrities list, and the three most valuable sports brands' worth is estimated to \$34 billion combined (Ozanian, 2012). As the sports industry generates enormous profits, understanding the strategies that sports brands employ to market their services and products, including their use of social media, is important.

Abeza & O'Reilly (2013) state that the research conducted so far supports the view that sports organization can benefit from relationship marketing. However, research into the use of social media, within the sports industry in general (Witkemper, Lim & Waldburger, 2012), and specifically into how social media are used in relationship marketing in sports (Williams & Chinn, 2010; Abeza & O'Reilly, 2013), is scarce.

Therefore, the aim of this paper is to explore the use of social media by sports brands to understand how this is used in relationship marketing. Specifically, this research will focus on the use of Twitter, one of the most popular social media platforms, by Nike and Adidas, two brands that have come to dominate the market. To understand how these brands explore social media enabled relationship marketing, following question will guide this study:

What is the role of relationship marketing in online marketing strategies of sports brands?

In order to understand how the brand's social media practices and strategies contribute to relationship marketing the following sub-questions are posed:

Sub-questions:

- 1) How are Nike and Adidas using the opportunities of relationship marketing on their tennis related Twitter accounts?
- 2) What is the importance of engagement in building relationship with customers of Nike and Adidas on their tennis related Twitter accounts?
- 3) What is the role of Twitter activity of tennis athletes sponsored by Nike and Adidas?

Since these questions aim at exploring the connections between the following three concepts: relationship marketing, social media, and sports brands, the findings might be relevant to anyone interested in sports marketing, or in using social media as marketing tools. At the same time this explorative study can show how sports brands use social media to sustain and deepen the relationships with their customers. It can contribute to understanding what the key components of the relationship between these brands and their social media followers are. Furthermore, these research questions can also facilitate an understanding of opportunities and challenges that are created for brands that engage with customers via social media.

The relevance of this study is that, even though the use of social media has gained a large amount of attention from the scientific community only few papers focus on their use in the sports industry (Witkemper, Lim & Waldburger, 2012). Undoubtedly the sports industry takes advantage of their opportunities using social media, however no publications have empirically examined brands that do this. This paper aims to explore how sports brands take advantage of Twitter to further their relationship marketing efforts.

By examining sports brands use of Twitter new information will be provided that will allow for interesting follow up studies. Based on the results obtained from this study it will be possible to determine if the relationship marketing practices employed by sports brands coincide with the scientific theory. As some of the theory is older than Twitter, or even social media in general, finding what is currently practiced will allow for a reexamination of outdated models from a new perspective and will allow marketing practitioners to draw from this.

In a similar spirit the areas in which the old theory holds true, and those in which it does not may be further examined. Building on that it could be explored why in certain areas the theory still applies and in others the use of a new medium has changed it. Since sports brands aim for long-term consumer retention (Witkemper, Lim & Waldburger, 2012). it can be beneficial to find out how they use their relationship marketing strategy on Twitter to achieve this. Such a finding could then be adapted for other industries, which share the desire for long-term consumer retention.

The results of this and any further enquiries will help guide professionals in their actions and establish a link between scientific theory and common industry practices. As Twitter is a fairly new medium further study is required in order to fully understand how it can best be employed (Witkemper, Lim & Waldburger, 2012). This holds true on a general level but especially for relationship marketing, as social media is an ideal tool for this.

2. Theoretical Framework

This part will give more insights on theory and the past research done on the main concepts used for this study and outline some key features of Twitter, as Twitter is the platform, on which the analysis will take place.

2.1. Relationship marketing

Williams & Chinn (2010) argued that: “the use of social media provides new opportunities to gain maximum leverage in strengthening and building long-term relationships” (p. 435). Given that the goal of relationship marketing is building and sustaining long-term relationships, the use of social media seems to be just the right tool to accomplish it. Furthermore, social media also facilitate some of the most important components of relationship marketing, namely interaction, relationships, and networks (Williams & Chinn, 2010). Research into relationship marketing has started to gain attention in the 1990s within academic circles, where it was proposed that relationship marketing is concerned with attracting, developing, and retaining customer relationship, with two main predictors of successful marketing efforts being commitment and trust (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Morgan & Hunt (1994) point out that customer commitment is in part what differentiates social from economic exchanges. Its presence paves the way for long-lasting relationships once the exchange has transitioned to a more social, than an economic nature.

The second predictor, trust, is also seen as central to establishing well functioning relationship marketing. It is essential that brands can be trusted, especially taking under consideration the amount of “voices” on the Internet, which now readily offer numerous opinions on a given brand and its products or services. Studies have also shown that it is crucial for brands to be able to communicate with their customers and handle their brand online and on social media (Kelleher, 2009; Van Noort & Willemsen, 2011). Van Noort & Willemsen (2011) stress that brands need to be aware how to communicate with their customers, on both brand- and consumer-generated platforms, and be able to manage their webcare appropriately. Additionally, in their research, along with Kelleher (2009) they point that using *human voice* in communication with customers helps to elicit positive feelings, such as trust, commitment, and satisfaction. Trust and commitment being core predictors of success of relationship marketing according to Morgan & Hunt (1994), it can be concluded that the ways in which brands interact with their customers online play a big role in the success or failure of sustaining long-term relationships. With this in mind, it is of utter importance for businesses to be able to handle online communication carefully, because due to the instantaneous nature of this medium, brand reputation can shift any moment.

Because relationship marketing is such a broad concept, there have been multiple

attempts to conceptualise it and create models of effective relationship marketing. One of the early models of relationship marketing models has been developed by Evans & Laskin (1994), through incorporation of multiple definitions of relationship marketing, its effects, and its application. Noteworthy is the fact that relationship marketing has already been identified as a continuous process, requiring constant communication with customers and integration of the fruits of this communication into the strategic planning of a firm (Evans & Laskin, 1994). Because social media have also been shown to be dynamic and empowering to the customers, in the sense that they can instantly communicate with their brands (Williams & Chinn, 2010), it might appear that social media is a perfect tool for brands to maintain relationships with customers. However, the social media that have emerged so far have not solved all the problems for relationship marketing advocates, as despite the fact that there exist channels to communicate with customers instantaneously and easily, the question of how to utilise these channels efficiently remains. This issue will be addressed as engagement in the latter part of this paper, while at this point the relationship marketing model will be briefly presented. The model is described as a process, which consists of marketing inputs, outputs and ongoing assessment.

There are four inputs identified: 'understanding customer expectations, building service partnerships, empowering employees, and total quality management' (Evans & Laskin, 1994, p. 444). While understanding customers expectations can seem easier now, because it is easier for brands to collect customers' feedback and for customers to reach the brands, it is still not granted that by mere hearing of the customers expectation, these will be properly understood. Building service partnership lets 'firms both differentiate and increase the usefulness of product offerings, and devise specific customer - centred approaches.' (Evans & Laskin, 1994, p. 445). Empowering customers means letting customers have a say on brands' decisions, which was more of a challenge back in 1994, as with the Internet gaining popularity customers are often seen as prosumers, who actively co-create the brand (Williams & Chinn, 2010). Lastly, total quality management refers to working on improving every facet of a brand and gaining a competitive advantage. These four marketing inputs, according to relationship marketing model offered by Evans & Laskin (1994), are to result in the following outputs: customer satisfaction, customer loyalty, quality products, and increased profitability. Once again, loyalty emerges as one of the central desired effects in relationship marketing approach.

Since the challenge of reaching more international audiences and customers that old media has faced has been overcome by social media, the problem for brands that aim to

have long-term relationship with their customers, is centred on how to engage these customers to their social media channels. Customer brand engagement (CBE) is a concept advocated by scholars who endorse relationship marketing, as 'customer engagement is anticipated to contribute to the core relationship marketing tenets of customer repeat patronage, retention and loyalty through affecting the customer experience' (Hollebeek, 2011, p. 556). Hollebeek (2011) has defined CBE as 'The level of a customer's cognitive, emotional and behavioural investment in specific brand interactions' (p. 565).

These investments have been further given three dimensions: immersion, passion, and activation. First, immersion means that customers' attention is fully focused on the brand and has been defined as customers' level of concentration in brand interactions. As for sports brands, customers' immersion might be observed by how often customers engage with the brand and how much time they devote – in this case that would involve actions including, active and passive, sports consumption as well as online and social media interaction as this is the context within which sports brands become visible. The second dimension – passion, is defined as 'the degree of a customer's positive brand-related affect in particular brand interaction' and also entails emotional investment, pride, and enthusiasm (Hollebeek, 2011, p. 567). For sports brands, passion can be simply passion for sports, particular sport, league, team or athlete, but also for the brand itself. Activation, the third dimension of CBE, is defined as the level of energy, time, and effort that a customer is willing to invest in a brand. Interaction and activation also entail customer's sharing their affect for the brand on social media (Hollebeek, 2011). It is important to know what it means for brands to be able to actually engage a customer with a brand, because it can be argued that for a relationship to be maintained, both parties need to be engaged in this relationship.

Once both parties become engaged on social media, it creates a favourable environment for brands to seize the opportunities that have emerged on social media channels. These opportunities appear due to the nature of the medium and the nature of customers, which has been very dynamic. Abeza, O'Reilly & Reid (2013) have analysed eight sports organisations on social media and have identified multiple opportunities. One of the potentials of social media for sports organisation is better knowledge of sport participants and fans. As stressed in the relationship marketing model from 1994, collecting feedback from customers and customers' research was somehow more difficult, but nowadays social media have facilitated a low-cost platform to collect relevant data

from customer, often utilized by companies.

Nowadays, customer's data is easily available on social media, as everyone who can actively interact with a brand needs to have an account, hence the data can be almost effortlessly obtained by brands on social networking sites. Another opportunity is advanced customer–organisation interaction, which means being able to interact with many individual customers simultaneously, addressing them directly, therefore creating more personal interaction. The third opportunity recognised by Abeza, O'Reilly & Reid (2013) is effective customer engagement. The potential of customer engagement has been addressed above, as well as its dimensions. Further, efficient use of resources (time and money) are said to create an opportunity for sports brands, especially when taking under consideration that 'sport consumers' dedication and loyalty are far stronger than the loyalty that any other customer exhibits to any other brand' (Abeza, O'Reilly & Reid 2013, p. 126). Keeping customers up-to-date, the possibilities to reply and communicate more efficiently, as well as delivering unique content through social media, is a definite opportunity for sports brands. Lastly, social media offer quicker evaluation of the customer–organization relationship status. By frequent communication on social media, as well as monitoring brand presence, it is easier for sports brands to evaluate the state of the relationship and act accordingly.

2.2. Social media and empowered customers

When talking about the ways in which brands use social media, it is crucial to note how social media evolved and how they changed the ways in which we communicate today. Livingstone (2004) points out that the nature of mediated communication shifted from one-to-many to either one-to-one or many-to-many. In many cases this means that there are no more gatekeepers, that people can spread and acquire information very fast and independent of their geographical location. Such developments posed certain threats to companies, which can now no longer fully control what is being said about their brands online, this stands in contrast to a time when they used to exercise more control over it, in the times of e.g. television or print media.

While some challenges of getting acquainted with new tools of social media appeared for brands, their increasing popularity has been quickly recognized by brands. Facebook currently seems to be the most popular social media platform, with 71% of

adults in the USA using it in 2013, in comparison to 67% in 2012 (Duggan & Smith, 2013). When it comes to consumption of news and access through mobile devices, Twitter leads the way with 54% of adults, leaving Facebook on a third position (38%), behind LinkedIn with 51% (Holcomb & Gottfried, 2013). This spread across multiple social networking sites might indicate that people use these platforms for different purposes or in different circumstances, which is important to note for a brand looking to expand its activities online.

Social media also play a big role in e-commerce. This is because customers often tend to rely more on reviews from their friends and peers before they purchase a product, therefore establishing brand's presence is crucial and can help creating brand equity (Harris & Dennis, 2011). Social media facilitate interaction with friends and sharing opinions about brands. That is why the importance of social media to brands and their online marketing cannot be understated, and their strategies need to be aligned with what is expected from the empowered customers.

There are also further opportunities, as well as challenges in the use of social media by sports organisations (Abeza, O'Reilly & Reid, 2013). Better access to sports participants and fans, and the greater amount of information about these groups are only few of the opportunities that emerge. Additionally, social media provide a quicker way to assess the customer-brand relationship, advance the interaction within this relationship and enable the customers to be more engaged (Abeza, O'Reilly, Reid, 2013). However, lack of control over messages posted on social media, along with identification of real fans and further concerns regarding reaching this group on social media, are among the challenges that await the brands on social networking platforms (Abeza, O'Reilly & Reid, 2013). Having in mind these opportunities and challenges, sports brands can be said to benefit from implementing marketing strategies that address these challenges, as well as nurture the relationship between the brand and customers.

The concept of social media has started gaining on significance with MySpace, one of the first networking sites, however it was not until Facebook emerged, with as many monthly active users as many of the big media outlets could only wish for, that social media became important. It marked the beginning of new business models, where due to "free access" to the service, people became its main product (Pearson, 2010). This means that the more people visit a given website or the more followers a given social media account has, the more advertisers and brands are willing to pay to promote a product on

that website or account. Information that users include on their profiles is valuable to all marketers, who can finally brand their products to cater to specific needs, desires and circumstances, in result focusing their target audience. Having users' information is what encompasses the idea of users being products, as through this process social media platforms monetise the traffic that takes place on their website.

After Facebook many other social networking sites appeared, such as Twitter and Instagram, which now are very popular and are among most used SNSs. Each of these websites has its own unique purpose, idea behind it, but often it serves also as an extension to another service or website. This generates more engagement from its users who can connect to the audience on each of the platforms (Brodie, Ilic, Juric, & Hollebeek, 2013). More and more advanced technology allows more people to access almost any information within just one click. And indeed, brands started to realise it and were therefore interested in finding their place in this online realm. As Mainwaring (2011) puts it: "In the first signs of a substantive shift, a few leading companies are starting to talk to customers where they live: on Facebook pages, Twitter streams, and blogs, using crowdsourcing to engage them in the products, services, and futures of their brands." (p. 86). This shift has led these companies to talk more to their customers, but they quickly realised that just mere fans and likes will not make a difference. Brands needed to engage those users, make them into something more than just numbers. "One million Facebook fans are not helpful to a brand if they are not engaged, whereas one thousand fans that share the same core values as the brand and who are willing to do, say, or buy something on he brand's behalf are extremely valuable." (Mainwaring, S. ,2011, p. 138). Fan acquisition on social media is therefore not enough, what is necessary for companies to make a change is generating fan action. The reason why brand engagement is desired, is because these are the dynamics that rule social media. It has been labelled as attention economy (Jansen, B.J., Zhang, M., Sobel, K., & Chowdury, A. 2009), because media is so saturated with content that brands need to draw attention to their content. It used to be a case that someone who could afford to pay for advertising on television was the one who got their message across. Now it has changed so that those who offer the most interesting content and who can create content that can go viral, are the ones who attract the most traffic.

Social media is also a place of dialogue, a place where all parties are equal and treated as such, being able to share their opinions. "When brands treat Facebook as yet another broadcast medium and Twitter like direct mail, they demonstrate a lack of

understanding of social-media dynamics inciting rejection and consumer criticism. If a brand displays genuine engagement with their community, then that is the feeling that consumers will share with their friends and peers.” (Mainwaring, S. ,2011, p. 138).

Another aspect of brands’ online activity is a need to be more careful of their actions on social media, or online in general, is the fact that what is posted once is actually visible to anybody. In contrast to the past, where customers could file their complaints only directly to a given company, now they can just write it on their profiles on social media, or on a forum, or a blog. Word-of-mouth (WOM) is still the most reliable measure for many customers when it comes to making their purchase decisions, and with the Internet the word-of-mouth has gained the power to be spread around the entire world. Sport products are no different, and Westerbeek and Smith (2003) state that: “When evaluating services prior to purchase, consumers will rely more on personal sources (word-of-mouth) because objective evaluation standards are less available for products high on experience qualities. This means that, despite all the cunning marketing angles that can be conceived about a sports product, the most convincing evidence remains word of mouth endorsement.” (p. 133).

What is more, social media have also brought more focus on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). No longer can a brand make mistakes and just cover them by bringing new campaign or a product and hope that people will forget. Customers have questions that they want to be answered and the need for a company to show real concern, not only because of the money, but also because brands should commit to making a change. Probably the most notable example of a brand needing to face some serious PR problems was when it was alleged that Nike was manufacturing in so called sweatshops (Birch, 2012). The working conditions for the employees of those companies were said to be horrible, neglecting their health and giving them almost no decent compensation for the work they do. Companies, which are accused of such actions, face much more difficulties convincing the public that nothing has gone wrong. It is not to say that such CSR issues are eliminated by Internet, but people’s knowledge of those issues has increased pressures on brands to act. So it can be more challenging for brands to avoid public scrutiny than before. Additionally, it is nearly impossible to “un-say” what has been said online.

Another important factor contributing to the popularity of social media is the ability to form online communities, which are in turn reinforced and connected through social

networking sites. Such online communities can be formed around many groups of interest, such as sports fans, certain lifestyle fans, or a brand's fans. In case of brands, engagement and passion of members of such community is often transform into brand loyalty (Brodie, Ilic, Juric, & Hollebeek, 2013).

In particular, sports fans are a group of people who show tremendous passion and commitment to their favorite athletes (Westerbeek & Smith, 2003). This enthusiasm can be translated into more engaged fans, who are more active rather than passive on social media, and therefore building a relationship with them is more achievable. Achieving that goal of establishing a relationships is a crucial factor in succeeding on these social platforms for brands (Westerbeek & Smith, 2003). What strategies they embrace in order to connect to these loyal fans is therefore a big component of their endeavour on social media.

2.2.1. Twitter

Twitter claimed more than 200 million regular users composed over 400 million daily tweets in 2013 (Cameron & Geidner, 2014). Other estimates suggest that Twitter is a more powerful tool to enhance business performance than Facebook (Paniagua & Sapena, 2014). This microblogging website is where 140 characters' long tweets are posted by its users, and serves as a communication tool for a variety of topics, such as politics, entertainment, as well as for example crisis communication (Bruns & Stieglitz, 2012). The tweets are then displayed to every follower of a given account, but can also be found by non-followers, who can find it by looking up a particular hashtag. However, often these two aspects of Twitters can overlap: "At the same time, the two network layers overlap: tweets marked with a specific hashtag will be visible both to the user's established followers, and to anyone else following the hashtag conversation." (Highfield, Harrington & Bruns, 2013). This is also important to note, because users are first displayed the tweets containing a searched hashtags embedded in the tweet of the accounts they follow. These features have led to people using Twitter during live or mediated events in order to join a conversation or simply to get informed (Highfield, Harrington & Bruns, 2013).

Twitter is often used alongside older technology, such as television. Due to the

nature of social networking sites, which allow to follow live and mediated events, as well as to comment or engage with other audience members, a simultaneous use of both technologies is possible. Unlike websites, SNSs are advantageous because they accumulate all websites, portals and people in one place. In this way literally everybody can be a part of a discussion. Many television programs display on the screen hashtags or other social networking sites' symbols to connect with the audience (Cameron & Geidner, 2014). This encourages greater engagement from fans and customers, which in turn can translate into increased brand loyalty (Brodie, Ilic, Juric & Hollebeek, 2013). Contrary to some opinions, old and new media technologies do not necessarily compete for an audience share. Turns out many use these two technologies to supplement each other, enhance their experience (Cameron & Geidner, 2014). This means that each medium has some intrinsic value, which is extended by additional medium or technology. As Highfield, Harrington & Bruns (2013) put it "Twitter is not a rival technology at all, then, but supports a raft of supplementary or complementary activities" (p. 317). What usually is given on social media, is some extra information, limited access photos, or interviews. One feature that decides often whether this information is perceived as credible or not, is a verification feature.

Verification feature is a way for people on Twitter (and other SNSs) to distinguish between real and fake accounts. Verified accounts, which are the real ones, are given a blue check symbol next to its name, and in this way whoever comes across this account, knows it actually belongs to the person it says it does. It is especially useful when it comes to famous people, celebrities, whoever attracts a lot of attention and has something to say. The reason for that is not only to protect "average" people - it is also protecting the verified account from having someone spread false or inaccurate information under their name. The same can be said about brands and their accounts. Another function of verification on Twitter serves a purpose of facilitating trust between fans and account holder. Nowadays there are a lot of accounts that are in fact "fan accounts", which means maintained by fans and not all of them identify as such, instead they appear as an original account of whoever the accounts' name is in. As Twitter states: "The verified badge helps users discover high-quality sources of information and trust that a legitimate source is authoring the account's Tweets." (<https://twitter.com/help/verified>) Additionally, account holders with a verification badge get to use exclusive features, absent on non-verified account. One feature, which is worthy of mention is that the visitors to their page are shown two timelines, one with tweets posted only by a given account ("No replies") or a timeline combining original tweets and

replies (“All”). These two timelines can be distinguished as one being used to observe and facilitate communication between any particular account and other accounts interacting with it (“All”), while the other displays only what an account holder says, without the replies.

2.2.2. Electronic Word of Mouth

Facilitating trust between any two parties in an online communication has been mentioned above, however the importance of trust is especially crucial for brands. Trust is also an underlying characteristic of any successful relationship, as is the case also in relationship marketing (Delgado-Ballester & Munuera-Aleman, 2000) Being a credible brand, which customers can trust is therefore a goal to achieve when establishing own presence on social media. The reason why that is the case, is the fact that more and more people use social media as an equivalent of a traditional “word of mouth”. They can see who says what about a given brand and form an impression that is sometimes completely not an impression that this particular company has hoped for. Additionally, these social media channels can often affect a purchasing decision of online shoppers. E-commerce has established itself very well, and if a company will not have an account on social media, it could look very suspicious. Therefore a smart online marketing strategy cannot only translate to sales, but also to overall reputation.

Establishing and maintaining a given reputation is a difficult task, as there are many unpredictable factors, even more so online, due to the fact that any brand can come up and promote their campaign, in contrast to television or print media. Additionally newcomers seem to have an advantage of building their brand from the beginning and sharing their growth with an online audience, which is different for brands that had already established themselves on a market and then have entered into social media realm with a certain perception of brand already formed in their customers’ eyes. This is important to note, as strategies for social media branding of both newcomers and established brands are most likely to differ, as are their ways of attracting new fans and keeping the ones that are already supporting a brand. Usually their resources are also much different. Established companies have a marketing department, a research and development department, an HR department, while newcomers are often a small group of people, who do not have such a strict division of roles, and develop rather organically. This might give an upper-hand to those newcomers, as they can adapt to the needs and wishes of their

customers more quickly, whereas established companies, which are pioneering in their industries often develop rather long-term goals and strategies that they have established and tested throughout longer period of time.

2.3. E-commerce

When it comes to social media function as an e-WOM tool, it has a big impact on e-commerce. E-commerce has increasingly become more and more popular choice when it comes to purchase behaviours of customers, and therefore marketing efforts on social media have also gained on importance. Petina, Zhang & Basmova (2013) have reported that “expenditures on social media marketing in the US are predicted to grow 34% annually and reach \$3.1 billion in 2014.” (p. 1546). This spending pattern is not a surprise, when one takes into consideration that 67% of Twitter users, who follow a brand, report buying a product from this brand, while 74% say that their purchasing decision is influenced by other members of a given social media. (Petina, Zhang & Basmova, 2013). What is more, a study by Goncalves Pereira, de Fatima Salgueiro, & Mateus (2014) points out that “40% of companies on social networks worldwide use the networks to attract new business, 51% to communicate with contacts, 51% to communicate with customers, and 58% to gather business intelligence.” (p. 696). A good understanding of how the potential customers engage with the brand via social media is therefore important also because it can help in generating further revenue.

2.3.1. Social media and corporate performance

It has also been shown that social media presence and direction of a brand can impact its financial performance. It is crucial information for companies, which should use this knowledge to better focus their strategy and efforts they put in social media marketing. Paniagua & Sapena (2014) have developed a model of how business performance is affected by social media. Firstly, they suggest that as social media aid in establishing an identity and reputation, social capital can be gained, which in turn translates in a corporate social performance. Secondly, online conversations about the brand, as well as sharing, reveal customers’ preferences and therefore serve as a tool to improve social marketing, which then affects its financial performance. And third part of this model pertains to the value of relationships and networking that are established through social media, which affects its operational performance. It is therefore of a great importance for a brand to be

mindful of the fact that mere online presence is not enough to attain positive output on all three of the above mentioned indicators, hence well crafted messages and communication skills in an online realm should be at the focus of brands that enter social media platforms. In order to be capable of designing and executing effective online strategies, it is essential to find out what attracts people to use social media and what are their motivations to do so. Goncalves Pereira, de Fatima Salgueiro, & Mateus (2014) have studied these motivations and found out that majority of respondents name being a consumer of the company as main reason to connect with them on social media, and also seeking to receive discount and promotions that appear on brands' social media profiles. The third main motivation was to show other that you like and support the brand. This further shows the strength of eWOM and how it affects people's perception of brands. At the end of the list is the motivation to be the first to get information about brand and access its exclusive content.

2.4. Trust and Engagement on Social Media

As previously mentioned, trust is an essential part of building a good reputation for a brand. Social media is crucial in developing trust for a brand as it is a place, where brands can demonstrate expertise in a given industry. Secondly, use of social media often requires more transparency from companies. In contrast to traditional advertising, where products are simply being offered and customers urged to buy them, social networking sites enable brands to present themselves from a bit different perspective, such as showing the humans behind the enterprise, which helps to achieve this. Moreover, social media promote spread of information via "word-of-mouth" - it is therefore difficult to hide inconvenient truths from online followers. By being transparent and willing to have an honest dialogue, companies can engage people, who in turn are more willing to get in a business with them.

Given that customers' trust is so important to a brand, the ways to facilitate this feeling must be understood. Delgado-Ballester & Munuera-Alemán (2001) found in their study that the higher the satisfaction of a customer, the higher their trust towards a brand. Additionally, overall satisfaction is more likely to evoke trust, when the involvement with a brand is higher. This indicates a reinforcing relationship between building trust and meeting customers' needs: in order to have a trusting customer, a brand needs to satisfy the customers' needs and encourage their engagement with a brand. At the same time the

authors of the above mentioned study has also found that the more trust a customer has, the more he is committed to this brand (Delgado-Ballester & Munuera-Alemán, 2001). Such finding indicates that trust is not a thing to acquire, but a process, which is strengthened or weakened by involvement with this brand. What is also crucial is that positive effects of trust on customer's satisfaction and engagement are most observable, when all these three components are present simultaneously. Therefore relationship marketing strategies must address all those aspects of relationship, in order to reinforce its components strength. There are several issues that stay in a way of an online customer to perceive a brand as trustworthy. One of them is an assumption of anonymity behind all the posts and comments that are published online. The problem here lays in the fact that in real life, as opposed to online, people interact with a particular person from a customer service. They hear their voices or speak to them face to face. They can ask for a name of an employee and potentially file a complaint about this interaction to their supervisors. Within this paradigm, in online environment, everybody can be posting and there is not a "person" that is accountable for what is being said or posted. The way that a brand handles this obstacle is an important step in gaining trust of its customers.

Another part of building brand trust on social media is also affected by the trust towards the medium itself (Bruns & Stieglitz, 2012). Bruns and Stieglitz (2012) have found that trust towards a brand on Twitter is affected by trust that a user has towards Twitter. It is easily understandable when one thinks of reception of any new technology. Due to the fact that a great part of communication between two people is a nonverbal, new technology often strips communication of exactly that. Phone conversation are less bonding than a face to face conversation, while text communication is deprived almost of all of the nonverbal cues that someone wishes to communicate. Therefore a level of trust towards a brand is also affected by the level of trust that the medium evokes in its users. By showing the more personal aspects of the brand, such as behind the scene looks on the brand on Twitter, brands are trying to make the most of the social media to address this issue.

2.4.1. Engagement & Commitment

As previously explained, a purpose of relationship marketing is to encourage to build long lasting relationship with customers (Williams & Chinn, 2010), which is predicated on strengthening customer's engagement with the brand. Engagement has been a concept,

which attracted a lot of attention in marketing research, as it has become more and more apparent that it is crucial for establishing a relationship with customers. Brodie, Ilic, Juric & Hollebeek (2013) have analysed many studies to state that: “The discourse portrays consumer engagement as a vehicle for creating, building and enhancing consumer relationships.” (p. 105). It is therefore demonstrated that engagement is not a thing that can be fixed once, but rather a process throughout which a relationship is formed and maintained. Furthermore, more definitions which are mentioned in Brodie, Ilic, Juric & Hollebeek’s study (2013) also point to the fluidity of this process, especially, when it is embedded in digital networks’ context. For that there are two definitions offered, namely: “The level of a customer's physical, cognitive and emotional presence in their relationship with a service organisation.” (p. 106), or: “The cognitive and affective commitment to an active relationship with the brand as personified by the website or other computer-mediated entities designed to communicate brand value.” (p. 106). Both these definitions lay emphasis on the cognitive presence or commitment, which shows that a customers’ minds are required for engagement to take place, independently whether it is on a conscious or unconscious level. Of course, it is preferable to have customers be aware of their engagement with a given brand, but on a subconscious level brand recall or recognition can also have its value. Additionally, having engaged customers can be quite beneficial for a brand. That is because according to Brodie, Ilic, Juric & Hollebeek (2013) engaged consumers are more likely to exhibit enhanced consumer loyalty, satisfaction, empowerment, connection, emotional bonding, trust and commitment.

2.5. Sports marketing

There has been little research done on the sports industry and social media (Witkemper, Lim & Waldburger, 2012). There is a need to improve the understanding of how sports industry uses social media as embracing social media as new tools and managing them with appropriate strategy might pose a challenge for sports brands (Williams and Chinn, 2010). As the trend of sports organizations and athletes to use social media becomes more popular (Witkemper, Lim & Waldburger, 2012), it seems that managing these platforms should be taken very seriously.

While a vast part of the literature concerning sports marketing focuses on the effects of sponsorship (Speed & Thompson, 2000; Smith, 2004; Abreu Novais & Arcodia, 2013), it lacks the connection to the shift that takes place and which gives the customers

the ability to absorb information about the brand through so many channels. Sports brands, which sell goods and merchandise, rather than services, engage mostly in sponsorship of events or athletes. In light of the fact that spending on sponsorship has been steadily increasing over years (Speed & Thompson, 2000), sports brands need to be aware of alternatives to market their products. By harnessing the power of social media they are likely to find an additional channel that is much less costly than the traditional approaches of sponsorship and advertising. Sponsoring and media can go hand in hand and reinforce each other's impact.

Through the sponsorship of events brands strive to embed themselves in the minds of the potential customers, strengthening brand awareness and recall, while by sponsoring athletes sports brands can reach fans of their athletes and foster their willingness to purchase products and also the better the results that the athlete achieve, the more often is he portrayed in the media, also increasing the brand recall. Brands try to be associated with the sports person that they sponsor, so that even when the person is seen, people link it with a brand, which further enhances their brand recognition.

The amount of money that is being invested into sponsorship for top athletes and teams indicates that it seems to be a good investment, taking under consideration that salaries keep on rising (Badenhausen, 2013b). While it seems that in academia attention has been concentrated on sports such as football, baseball, basketball (which are the most profitable, but also team sports), research on individual sports is less frequent. Meanwhile, the highest paid individual sports athletes compete mostly in golf and tennis (Forbes, 2003) The validity of the assumption of a causal relationship between customers' perception of a sponsored athlete and the performance of the sponsor as a result of this relationship is outside of the scope of this study, as the focus here is on brands and not on customers. Instead, in the paper opportunities that exist for sports brands to enhance their relationship marketing, through the athletes they sponsor and capitalise on their presence on social media, will be explored.

One important aspect of sports marketing to consider at this point is the relevance of maintaining long-term relationships of the sports brands with their customers. In order to understand the potential of such relationships, it is important to scrutinize the motives

behind sports consumption. These are quite similar for both offline (attending events or watching television) and online consumption and include interest in the sports, team, and players; entertainment; and team support, but also information and knowledge, escape, and vicarious achievement (Hambrick, Simmons, Greenhalgh & Greenwell, 2010). Moreover, sports consumption is also motivated by family bonding and social opportunities as watching and participating in sports often accompany social gatherings (Hambrick, Simmons, Greenhalgh & Greenwell, 2010). At the same time studies have shown that for sports brands to be successful it is beneficial to see customers as “lifetime partners and try to understand their changing wants, desires, and values” (Abeza, O’Reilly & Reid, 2013, p.123). In order to be able to view customers this way, it is crucial to establish a communication channel, through both parties can fulfill their motivations.

What is important for sports marketers is that studies have shown a connection between sports consumption motives and fan behaviours, such as increased fan identification and loyalty, as well as more regular purchasing of merchandise and other related products (Hambrick, Simmons, Greenhalgh & Greenwell, 2010). In that sense, it would be beneficial for sports brands to maintain and expand their existing fan base and further foster fan identification and loyalty, for which a relationship marketing approach might be compelling. Additionally, increased levels of identification and loyalty can create further advantages for sports brands by lowering the price sensitivity towards their products (Abeza, O’Reilly & Reid, 2013; Iyer & Muncy, 2005).

There are good reasons for sports brands to ensure that they are able to form and maintain long-term relationships and aim at increasing the loyalty and identification of sports fans. This approach also allows marketers to communicate with their customers understand their changing needs and desires. While there has been limited research on relationship marketing in sports industry, majority of those focused on team sports, general conceptualisation of relationship marketing and sports marketing, and usually less global, in its nature sports, such as NASCAR or NBA in the USA (Abeza, O’Reilly & Reid, 2013). However, all these studies “generally accept that sport organisations can benefit from relationship marketing” (Abeza, O’Reilly & Reid, 2013, p. 122). Therefore, in this paper the use of social media in relationship marketing will be explored using an example of tennis.

Identification and loyalty have been shown to be important in sports marketing and that it is also important for sports organisations to be fully aware of how they can be

increased in customers and leveraged to the brands' commercial advantage. That is why sports brands sponsor players, so that fans through identification and loyalty to their favourite players would be more inclined to buy products of the brand they endorse and at the same time would not be sensitive to the price. If relationship marketing for sports organisations was to rely, to a great extent, on the idea of fan identification and fan loyalty, then it would be reasonable to expose the customers to the athlete as often as possible, in order to reinforce levels of both identification and loyalty.

3. Methods

3.1. Qualitative Approach

As the purpose of this study is an exploration of the social media practices of sports brands through their use of Twitter, a qualitative approach was deemed most appropriate. Qualitative methods of inquiry allow to examine opinions, statements, perceptions and views in a flexible manner, and with due appreciation to the context and social settings, within which the stakeholders are located (Berg, 2001). Although there are many methods and approached within the qualitativve methodology, the unifying goal is often to understand the stakeholder's world, to "make sense of their surroundings through symbols, rituals, social structures, social roles, and so forth." (Berg, 2001, p. 10). Since people are on constant basis more and more exposed to online messages and content, it is important to know how this realm is made up, i.e. what constitutes the context of the opinions that they voice online. Also given that an increasing number of social settings are embedded in the digital realm, identifyfing social media practices in this relatively new settings is another reason to pursue a qualitative research approach, as qualitative methodology is suitable for an explorative study. Additional justification for using qualitative research is that it has been embedded in natural settings, where daily interaction between sports brands, their customers and other stakeholders take place and allows to analyze these interactions with reference to this context (Creswell, 2007). Qualitative analysis allows to identify patterns and themes of ideas visible in the data. Finding possible patterns of how sports brands use social media to capture the attention of their audience would be useful for brands who just enter the online world and try to figure out their best strategies.

To provide a summary and an overview of the data, this study drew on content analysis, a qualitative approach, which through systematic and rigorous coding allows to identify and quantify the key sentiments within the dataset. Subsequently, a grounded theory-like approach was chosen to guide the data interpretation, as it allowed the research to move beyond examining certain phenomenon to generation theory, “an abstract analytical schema of a process” (Creswell, 2007, p. 63). As research into relationship marketing on social media is scarce, this approach was deemed appropriate, as it encourages development of a theory that helps to explain the observations organically, by studying the data. This aspect is important for this study as it “might help explain practices”, which is an underlying reason for conducting this research (Creswell, 2007, p. 63). A more detailed account of how the data analysis has been carried out is going to be provided further on.

Due to a rapidly changing social media environment, data was captured on two separate occasions - first in 2014 and second time in 2015. By comparing samples from these two time periods this paper is to bring more accurate accounts of brands' practices. Additionally it could yield results that show how the brands' strategies are constantly evolving and adapting to their customers' needs and desires. Coding was conducted through the same person on both instances and has been carried out independently from each other. Therefore new observations can be gained, and possibly differences find not only between two chosen brands, but also between brands and their practices on these two occasions.

In order to best capture how sport brands are using social media and relationship marketing, certain decisions needed to be made on how to best accomplish this goal. Three major questions emerged: First, which sports brands are to be chosen? Since many online companies have been studied, but little of them have been sports brands, it was good to use for the sample a brand that is well established and has had a clear and effective marketing strategy throughout its existence. Additionally, many brands enter social media without clear strategy in mind on what their goals and opportunities online are, so it is to be assumed that these well grounded companies would be good representations on how “it is to be done”. Such brands would be the best at what they do and this has been decided on their performance on the market, as well as extensively developed marketing/media presence.

The second question was which social media platform to research? Obvious answer was to take under consideration platforms which have the most active users and are used globally. Another factor that is to be thought of is what kind of content is most shared through this platform. As this study pertains to relationship marketing and it is imperative that some kind of dialogue would be possible to be captured. Therefore text was chosen as a next decisive factor in which platform it would be. Relationship marketing being a part of what is being studied in this paper determined yet another direction - a place where brands interact a lot with their fans, their ambassadors, their customers and other stakeholders.

The third question, which emerged, was what kind of sport to investigate. The reason why it was important to choose a certain sport is because it is to be believed that people connect better with humans than with brands (Van Noort & Willemsen, 2011) and sports brands are known for hiring athletes and providing them with sports wear for when they are competing. The choice was whether to choose team or individual sports. Football is for example a very popular sport, in many countries people would probably say it is the most popular, and there are many famous football stars, however sports brands, which provide apparel for the players usually have a contract signed with the entire team, not a particular football player. Fans are also foremost supporters of a certain team and later have a favourite player. Individual sports do not have that element - fans are mostly focused on one certain player, instead of a team or a country the player represents. Another factor worth taking under consideration was to find a sport that is equally scattered through both genders - the example of football shows that not in each sport men and women enjoy similar popularity. Male football players are better known, receive higher prize money and are better paid by their sponsors, than their female counterparts (Close, 2016).

3.2. Choice of Tennis, Twitter & Nike and Adidas

3.2.1. Tennis

The first direction of this study that was taken was to look closely at sports marketing on social media. With the rationale in mind to examine if and what kind of relationships occur between stakeholders on social media platforms, some boundaries needed to be set that would allow to analyse these phenomena more closely. Tennis was

chosen as a sport as it is one of most popular individual sports, along with golf. It was important that it is not a team sport, as teams can be treated as entities of their own. This would require the additional, individual analysis of the twitter accounts of many popular players and national representations. The resulting complexity to tracing the relationships that evolve in such extensive networks would go far beyond the scope of this study. At the same time, interaction with an individual player, instead of a team, provides the audience with a more personal feeling and was therefore favoured as the topic of this study.

Another factor is an equal representation of male and female players in the sports. This means that there are many well know men and women in a given sport and that they also earn roughly the same amount of money and generate more or less the same amount of money for their sponsors and endorsers. While male tennis players do not necessarily earn as much as men in sports such as football, female tennis players certainly overshadow other disciplines when it comes to their earning and marketability. The top ten most marketable women in sports contain 7 tennis players. Another reason is that social media and sports fans are equally men and women, sometimes even maybe more male, so marketing females makes sense for a brand, whose customers are male as well.

3.2.2. Twitter

When it comes to choosing a platform, on which to perform the analysis, it was decided to focus on Twitter. Firstly, Twitter is a very popular platform in sports, with many athletes using it and also it proving to be very efficient in broadcasting live scores, due to its concise nature and easy way to follow a thread by using a hashtag. Secondly, both Adidas and Nike have a separate “Tennis” account, which was not the case with e.g. Facebook. Next to Facebook, YouTube and Instagram are very popular, however these platforms focus on visual media, such as video and photography. This study aimed at exploring a textual context of communication between brand and its customers, therefore Twitter, which is centrally text based, was deemed most suitable. Its function allows for short exchange and can be easily followed by using a reply function.

Another issue that needed to be decided on was whether to include only “tweets” or “tweets and replies” in the data. The difference consists in the fact that if a tweet starts with a mention (@) then these tweet is seen as a reply, while in cases not starting with a “@”,

tweets are just “tweets”. Since this study aims at exploring relationship marketing integration on social media, capturing a conversation between a brand and a customer is at the core and hence “tweets and replies” were recorded for the analysis. For the sake of clarity tweets, which were not reply tweets are referred to as original tweets throughout this paper.

The goal of capturing a conversation with a customer leads to another question, which is; how to define a customer? This is quite challenging, as customers are not the only group that interact and follow the sports brands on Twitter, fans of tennis players, the brand itself, or random people also come in contact with them. However, as this study explores the marketing strategies of brands, what they post and how they approach their, at least potential, customers should be the key focus of our analysis. Hence approaching any user with which the sports brands interact, as a (potential) customer was opted for in this study. This only leaves the choice of sports brands that are going to be analyzed open.

3.2.3. Nike and Adidas

Nike and Adidas were chosen because they are one of the top global brands, when it comes to sports, perceived as most popular. This is however also a limitation of this study, as it is also possible that less popular brands are more inclined to try to form long-lasting relationships with their customers and utilize free platforms, such as social media, for that purpose, because otherwise they do not have a chance to compete with big brands, such as Nike and Adidas. However, all top ten female and male tennis players are sponsored by either one of these two companies, which makes them impossible to omit, if one wishes to study the players as well. Actually the sports brands profiles are expected to highlight these players, as players are the focal point of promotion for sports brands.

3.3. Data collection

To explore the relationship marketing efforts made by Adidas and Nike on twitter their individual tweets were collected. Data collection was done on two separate occasions - in 2014 and a year later in 2015. In that way the purposive sample got richer, as well as potential for more observations has emerged. Another reason why having a sample that was collected during different time periods is beneficial for this research is to see how brand strategies and practices change and how they adapt to the social media

environment. Patterns of their online behaviour can also be more visible when this double sample is investigated. Data collection was done through the use of Twitonomy.com, a website which allows the user to analyse and download tweets, as well as provide brief statistics on the profile under inspection. It is a paid service, which only works if one has a Twitter account.

Despite the fact that some features are accessible for free, downloading tweets in an Excel file, in order to analyse them, is only provided via the paid option. The details that are to be analysed entail for example frequency of tweeting, most re-tweeted accounts, most replied to user, etc. 14th January 2014 was set as the starting date for data collection, due to the fact that the year's first major tennis event (Australian Open) starts at that time. Presumably it is the moment when all stakeholders have the biggest incentive to participate and appear in most media outlets. Another reason to opt for this date is that it is the first event in the year, on which most high ranked players appear at the same time (both males and females) and therefore spectatorship is expected to increase, as well as sponsors wanting to capitalise on the popularity of the event and the players competing. Second time collection was done from 22.03.2015 for Adidas and from 06.06.2015 for Nike. The last tweet in the sample appears on 25.10.2015 for Adidas and 17.10.2015 for Nike. The explanation for such a gap in the beginning of the sample collection was the reason that 200 tweets span upon longer period of time for Adidas account, and it was desirable for the summer period, that is for June, July, August to be accounted for, as during these three months, three major tennis events take place - Grand Slams. 200 tweets were to be collected from both accounts with the same starting date. The amount of tweets is restricted to the fact that at the time of data collection (10.04.2014) @Adidas Tennis would not have sufficient amount of tweets and the starting data of data collection for @Adidas Tennis started on 20.09.2013. Anymore Tweets would resulted in too big of discrepancy in periods over which data for Nike and Adidas were collected. This should not be considered an issue, as this period still encompasses the Australian Open tournament, and also does not include any major event of that importance for the tour in preceding year. Another question to be decided was whether to collect only original tweets or also reply (tweets), but as this study also aims at exploring the relationships between stakeholders within social networks, replies were chosen to be included as well.

During the revision of tweets selected for analysis, it was revealed that a portion of replies were in response to the campaign #AskVika (Vika - Victoria Azarenka, a tennis

player). She was the one responding to the questions with this hashtag, despite the fact she was using @Nike Tennis account. Therefore 59 tweets were excluded from content analysis. A total of 341 tweets were used in the analysis of this study (Appendix 1).

3.4. Data Analysis

Data analysis entailed a manual content analysis of the tweets. Almost each of the tweets contained a link to a related image; these images were not included in the coding. The reasons for this is that this research focuses on the interaction between Twitter users and the brands, and because a vast majority of links linked to a picture for which the tweet was a caption, simple portrayal of the mentioned player or hashtag. First, it started with an open coding approach, driven by the research question, and an individual tweet was the chosen unit of analysis. Each tweet could be assigned to more than one category and the data was coded by two coders. The coding framework was revised and updated during the coding process by comparing and contrasting the emerging codes and to reflect the recursive nature of the qualitative inquiry. The 13 open coding categories included categories such “tennis player male”, “advice”, “product mention”, a complete overview can be found in Appendix 1. Appendix 2 shows tweets coded by a second coder.

To further explore the emerging codes, axial coding was subsequently applied. Existing codes were compared and similar sentiments were connected with one another in order to identify the main themes. This task was quite challenging, as the tweets can be of 140 characters' length only, most of the time containing a link. Therefore axial coding focused on connecting the categories within the tweet itself, but also in comparison with other tweets. That would be especially a case when one pattern would start to emerge, such as following categories closely together, e.g. in a tweet reply: “tennis player”, “product”, and “inquiry”. This pattern required looking closely into when and in what circumstances those three categories are connected and why they occur together.

It should also be added that not everything in a tweet could fit a category and some text was therefore left out. However each tweet had at least one open coding category and in this way it was possible to find out what a particular tweet pertained too. Such cases were quite rare, as most of the tweeting style was rather schematic, regular and included the same patterns.

3.5. Intercoder Reliability

Intercoder reliability is a term used to describe the extent to which two or more independent coders are in agreement for the codes they develop and reach the same conclusion (Lombard, Snyder-Duch & Bracken, 2002; MacPhail, Khoza, Abler & Ranganathan, 2015). In order to get a grasp of the reliability of the open coding for this research a second coder was asked to code a portion (10%) of the tweets. Tweets from Adidas and Nike were represented to equal parts in this second coding. The categories found by the second coder were then compared with those identified by the first, looking for similarities and differences in the categories identified. Another aspect that was compared was how the two coders found the connections between the various tweets.

Both coders were able to identify the same main themes throughout their respective analysis. Motivation was a theme both coders identified identically. In contrast to this stands the category of customer service, which coder 2 identified as support. Surely customer service and support are not entirely synonymous however of the mutually examined tweets these two categories seemed to correspond to each other. The category identified by coder 1 as promotion was named product by coder 2. In this case the two categories share the underlying concept of the sports brand trying to get their product recognised by their twitter followers.

The largest difference in the categories of the two coders lies in their depth. Coder 1 was able to identify sub-categories that provide a deeper insight to the type and intent of certain tweets while coder 2 was not. This seems natural as coder 2 was not given all the tweets allowing for a smaller variety of tweets and less frequent tweets of similar sub categories. Nonetheless the fact that both coders identified the same or very similar categories indicates that the coding is fairly reliable.

4. Results

The following section will present and discuss the results. It is divided into four major themes. Coding of both samples has resulted in quite similar coding categories, therefore the differences will be highlighted when they occur.

Final coding framework	Initial coding framework
Promotion and Customer Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Product presentation - Sale updates - Information about products
Motivation and Positive Reinforcement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Question to a follower about wellbeing - Question to a follower about their game results - Congratulations - Call to action - #WhereIPlay - Players' qualities
Customer Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Inquiry into customers' products satisfaction - Question about product features - Inquiry into customers' preferences
Tennis Players Engagement / Tennis promotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tennis player mention - Tennis specific vocabulary

The first theme is promotion and customer service. It talks about how Twitter is used for promotion of brands' products and how customer service is done through Twitter. Promotion includes all kinds of product introduction, presentation and special sales opportunities. Moreover it overlaps with customer service, because it includes product information. It occurs mainly when a given Twitter account is asked a question regarding a given product, hence the overlap.

The second theme is motivation and positive reinforcement. This is a major theme, as most tweets to the followers have some kind of motivating message included. There are, however two different approaches - one when talking about tennis players and the other when referring to the follower. These differences will be elaborated on in detail in below. This category also entails most of used hashtags, an inherit feature of Twitter. What kind of hashtags are used is an important, because this is how people find a given trending

topic. Additionally it is where relationship with fans is formed and where players are mostly engaged.

The third theme is customer engagement. It highlights how both brands try to generate engagement from their followers. It is an important component of eWOM, therefore all attempts at generating engagement within online communities needs to be analysed. In a way hashtags can be seen as a part of stimulating customer engagement, however the message behind hashtags is deeper than just an attempt to create a trend.

The fourth theme relates to tennis specific vocabulary and tennis players' engagement in the Twitter conversations. It highlights ways in which both brands use their ambassadors to promote themselves and products they sell. It also goes to show what various strategies brands have in order to include a given tennis player in the conversation. This can be as simple as an advertisement in which they appear, or more complex as conducting Q&A session on Twitter with them. Despite the fact that Q&A sessions are not coded in this research, they do present a strong case in engaging tennis players in various ways to interact with fans.

More broadly, in order to be able to determine how sports brands use the opportunities of relationship marketing, it is important to explore the ways in which @Adidas Tennis and @Nike Tennis use their Twitter accounts in general. This can show what marketing strategies they use and to what degree they entail relationship marketing. The following issues should be raised when determining these opportunities: what Twitter is used for in general; what kind of interaction with other users takes place on Twitter; and who are the other users (customers, fans, etc.).

4.1. Promotion and Customer Service

To understand how the two brands use Twitter for promotion and customer service, it is helpful to distinguish between original tweets and reply tweets. The reason for this is the fact that both the brands' tweeting style and content vastly differs depending on these two cases. This means that despite the fact that both tweets and reply tweets may focus on products or athletes, the goal of the tweet is usually different. While original tweets are mostly a promotional tool (either for the products, brand itself, or the athletes), replies and what they are about depend mainly on what topic the initiating posters touch upon. Original tweets in their majority contain a link to a picture/advertisement. These tweets with a link

can be classified as a photo-tweet, for which a text part of a tweet serves as a caption for that photo, the majority of original tweets falls under this classification. It is also important to mention that almost all of these photo-tweets display a tennis player wearing the given brand's products.

Adidas Tennis:

Fabio can always take the heat. #ClimaChill #SonyOpenTennis <http://t.co/g5Nb3TXfYL>

Nike Tennis

Find your rhythm. @SerenaWilliams <http://t.co/bVrhQloR7b>

The first tweet emphasizes how the technology used in production of its equipment helps the player to deal with hot conditions during the Sony Open tennis tournament. The second tweet is directed at Serena Williams and her wearing a Nike gear. These are simple displays of the product these two brands sell by the use of the athletes they sponsor.

While displaying these two exemplary tweets, it is worthy to acknowledge the difference between these two brands in respect to mentioning the players in such tweets. A vast majority of Nike players is mentioned explicitly, while Adidas players not always have a Twitter account and therefore are only mentioned by their name. The lack of a twitter account makes it more difficult for a user to look up this player and get acquainted with them even further.

When it comes to reply tweets, these conversations are mostly related to the products that Adidas and Nike sell – they look like a typical customer service inquiry executed through Twitter. These usually answer a question about a product (details, availability, etc.) or are in reaction to either positive or negative feedback. Below are examples of such exchanges. It is worth noticing how both of the replies contain some kind of detail about Nike (about each shoe being built from scratch, or about their goals). It can also be perceived as a reassurance of commitment to customer satisfaction and also the effort, which is put into that. Additionally, by using expressions such as “We hear you” Nike shows understanding and care towards its customers.

Nike Tennis

@CasteleinLieze Hi Lieze, since each shoe is built from scratch, we can't expedite orders but we promise your iDs will be worth the wait!

In this tweet Nike is responding to a customer enquiry about shipping times. Even though Nike cannot deliver their products any faster their response justifies the waiting time by emphasizing the product's value.

Nike Tennis

@OliverPeyron We hear you. We want you to break serves, not laces. Get in touch with the retailer and, if that doesn't work, let us know.

Here Nike is responding to a complaint/inquiry in regard to a product. Nike recommends more than one solution to address the problem and uses the word "break" for its general meaning but also its specific meaning in tennis. This demonstrates care for their customers and a good understanding of the sport that they share. It also links to relationship marketing, because Nike wants to be transparent and build trust that they are doing their best to help resolve an issue.

Such replies are directed exclusively at the user who asks the question; therefore it does not mention other users or include a hashtag. Less frequent are questions rather unrelated to the brand itself, such as for example about rules of tournaments in which tennis player compete, such as this:

Adidas Tennis

@tommy_n76 Good question. Different rules apply to different tournaments. Hope this helps.

This tweet is a reply to a question about tennis in general. Even though the question has nothing to do with Adidas and its products Adidas replies. This goes to show a high level of engagement with followers, as they feel comfortable to address such a question to Adidas rather than a tennis organization.

Another part of replies constitutes tweets that are inquiry about shoes and apparel of the players. Some want to confirm if they got the model right or if a particular model is available to the wider public. In such cases these players are not mentioned in a reply tweet, presumably because they are not at core of that issue as this can be treated as customer service as well, however it shows that the athletes are often a channel through which a customer finds out about a product and turns to a given brand for more information. It is not always the case that the tweet is about one player in particular, but for shirts seen on players in general. In such cases there can be a hashtag, indicating from

which campaign or collection these products are, like in an example by below from Adidas Tennis.

Nike Tennis

@tianya79 @tenniswarehouse Hi, unfortunately these were made specifically for Roger Federer and are not for sale to the public.

In this exchange Nike responds to an inquiry about a product that a follower had seen being worn by Roger Federer, an athlete sponsored by Nike.

Adidas Tennis

@AndyMurrayFans The #Climachill polo comes in several colors

This tweet is directed at a fan account that focuses on the tennis player Andy Murray, it points out the variety of Adidas products.

Another important aspect is social media, or Twitter specific, campaigns. These are always conducted through the use of a hashtag. These campaigns cover various promotional activities. One can argue that promotional activities are also used to show more human side of the company, which increases transparency and trust, thus being an example of relationship marketing. Three main types of these activities can be said to be: new product line/introduction of a product line; introduction of an athlete; and “call for action”. Call for action refers to brands encouraging their followers to take part in an action, which is under a given hashtag theme. Below are examples for all three of these hashtags’ use in a respective order.

When every degree counts, I choose #Climachill. #SonyOpenTennis @tsonga7
<http://t.co/wuwW7kS62K>

Ask A Champion. On Feb 18th at 3:15pm PST, @Vika7 will answer your questions. Submit questions now and tag #AskVika. <http://t.co/NHUXZplJQv>

Back to your roots. @Xavigasso's story began in Barcelona, Spain. Share your court, name the city & tag #WhereIPlay. <http://t.co/Ahajq4wg3j>

The first example shows how a product line called Climachill is introduced with a promotional slogan, hashtag, player, and a photographer. This is a way in which most

original promotional tweets are posted. However, the difference is that Adidas uses the hashtag to connect many tweets, which all contain a product from a line, whereas Nike, having more personalized products throughout players, does not embed it into one bigger campaign. They still use the photograph and a caption/promotional slogan to present a given product. The Second example shows a campaign, in which one of Nike's players tweets through the Nike Tennis Twitter account and replies to the questions of fans through the use of hashtag #AskVika. Despite the fact that there is only one instance of such an event taking place in the Twitter accounts of both brands, it is significant to mention it, as it shows that through the brand. Utilizing both the relationships between player's fans and the player, and the relationship of the players and Nike, relationship between Nike customers and Nike can be strengthened in most cases, or at least initiated. In this way, the player itself stands in for the brand and the presence of the player becomes the signifier of the brand. The player becomes the face of the brand, which again, helps to create an impression of a personal, direct relationship between the brand and the customers. The third example depicts a call for action, in this case to share a picture of a tennis court, on which followers of @Nike Tennis play. This does not serve a purpose of promoting a certain product or brand itself, but rather to create a "buzz" and stimulate users to share something more personal about each other, get to know each other, and feel more as a part of a certain community, in this case the tennis community. That relates back to relationship marketing – it is personal, it encourages two way conversation, allows to get to know the customer and therefore establish an engagement and connection. At the same time, it utilizes the features of social media by allowing many-to-many communication, which takes place on Nike's Twitter, which Nike appears to host and stimulate.

Adidas also uses another approach to focus the attention on their players and put them in the center of their tweets. They mention the players to display them or address them, while they are in contact with one of their brands, on- and off-court. For example; this can be in form of a compliment, while they are in an Adidas store or try out new products. The picture linked to in the end of such tweet is usually not a professional picture, but one that is taken by players themselves or with a phone for social media. By using this amateur-like approach it gives the audience the impression that they are sharing the personal lives of their idols. In this way the brand allows fans to get to know their favorite players better and, in turn, interact with them more. Such examples are depicted below.

Adidas Tennis

We're loving the nails @mkirilenko! Maria took a break from #Sochi to hang out with fans at our store: <http://t.co/ij4x9TFMt1>

This tweet points out the store visit of Maria Kirilenko, an athlete sponsored by Adidas, who took time off from the 2014 Winter Olympics to spend time with fans at an Adidas retail location.

Jerzy checks out how his new @adidaseyewear shades are looking. Don't worry Jerzy, looking great. <http://t.co/h5arKw1jFa>

This tweet's caption an image of an athlete trying on Adidas products, complimenting him on how well they suit him.

Nike utilizes this approach on only few occasions, by a special theme "Get to know ...". These are however links to YouTube channel of Nike Tennis with small clips introducing players, who are starting to achieve success and therefore are only building a fan base.

Nike Tennis

Get To Know: @GrigorDimitrov <http://t.co/ZJHuzhyf6S>

This tweet links to a video with a short introduction of Grigor Dimitrov, an upcoming tennis player sponsored by Nike. By raising attention to this player they increase his viewership and in return is value as an advertising vehicle.

As can be seen, both original tweets and replies are equally important for sport brands and they use the first kind of tweets mainly as a promotional tool and second kind for customer service needs. Whereas original tweets are more often focused on an athlete, replies are mainly centered on products of the brands. Athletes are at the core of their promotional efforts, appearing on a vast majority of the pictures posted, there seem to be less emphasis on players in reply tweets. Having demonstrated what Twitter is used for in general by sports brands we see when and how tennis players are a focal point in promotion of the products offered by Adidas and Nike.

Reply tweets, being mostly customer service, can be concluded to aim at increasing satisfaction with a brand, staying in touch, showing commitment to offering a good

customer service by mere adding an alternative channel to communicate with a brand. This way a brand can build reputation and trust. Great customer service is one way to show interest in preserving a long lasting relationship with a customer, and in itself can be perceived as relationship marketing. Moreover such communication between a customer and a brand is visible to the public, which makes potential customers or mere visitors to their Twitter accounts see how other customers are treated and how their feedback is taken by a brand. What is communicated to the public through original tweets can be said to be equally important and might also serve to ensure a long lasting relationship with customers. In order to answer the question of how relationship marketing is integrated through social media by these two sports brands the following section will show what style of tweeting is used and what kind of message it communicates.

The final promotion and customer service coding framework emerged from three initial coding frameworks, these were product presentation, sale updates and information about products. These three categories are one of the main function of the Twitter accounts and they provide the most interaction between the followers and the brands' accounts. For this purpose Nike and Adidas also use a reply option the most, as that is where people come asking questions before their potential purchase. As highlighted in the importance of "webcare", many customers have shifted in their ways of communicating with brands, often starting with online environment, particularly social media. Many brands declare their time of an average response to somewhere close to two hours, hence people get used to the fact that they can get a desired feedback quicker and more conveniently through social media than for example telephone.

4.1.2. Product presentation

The first initial coding category was product presentation. In order to demonstrate an exemplary tweet falling into this category, we can look at both Nike and Tennis accounts.

Adidas Tennis:

Bring colour to the court #Saksaywaman <http://t.co/2L9msFKo5w>
<http://t.co/vUVSMQWozF>

This tweet showcases Adidas products, it links to the Adidas store and an image of a very colorful product.

Nike Tennis:

Built for speed. Designed to last. The women's Zoom Cage 2. <http://t.co/ZtsfelT9bg>
<http://t.co/EEEYwpgl1O>

In this tweet Nike points out the lightweight and durability of their product.

In both cases the tweet contains a picture of a product that the tweet is about and a slogan to this products. The difference is that Adidas uses hashtag for its product line and Nike does not. Using hashtag can be worth it, as it gives everybody looking for that hashtag an instant list of tweets containing this hashtag and therefore can be more easily found within Twitter. At the same time, one does not need to use a hashtag to find a given phrase. That is why it is possible to look up "Zoom Cage 2" and still have Nike's tweet in the results. What a hashtag does is invite others to use it to and create a conversation around this given hashtag. It is usually an implicit invite that creates a possibility for an owner of a given model to share a picture or a review of it. This consumer generated content can work as "social proof" - meaning that people who see that others are posting pictures online and giving positive feedback are more willing to buy the model for themselves. This process can also turn against a brand if the feedback is negative and as a result the audience is instantly lead towards all the bad reviews under one hashtag. In such a situation social media allow the brand to trace and immediatly manage the dissatisfied sentiment of their customers. This illustrates how using hashtags to tag a product has advantages and disadvantages requiring social media managers to decide on the path most beneficial to their situation.

4.1.3. Sale updates

The next initial coding framework was labeled sale updates. These tweets pertain mainly to the sales and unique models opportunities that were made available by the brands. This type of tweets was not so prevalent, but made up an important part of the promotion and customer service theme that later emerged. Also it is worth pointing out that most of the updates about sales and promotions are not in original tweets, but in reply tweets. This is most likely due to the fact that people inquire about products they see in shops, online or worn by athletes. That is why sales updates were further categorised as promotion and customer service. Online customer service, especially through social media is being employed by brands with increasing popularity as this is considered good webcare. With increased popularity of these channels for communication with brands, it can be expected

that customers are going to choose Twitter as means of getting the answers they seek. Additionally the official Twitter accounts are in English and mostly aimed at US followers, but there are many accounts made for a particular region or country, where the interaction with a brand through Twitter may differ, however is available.

Another way in which Twitter accounts serve as a customer service tool is by organising contests to win either Adidas or Nike products. Below is an example of a tweet that asks Twitter followers to send a picture of their shoes, for a chance to win a new model. These kinds of contest are mostly aimed at people, who already own a pair of Adidas shoes. This can also be received as “social proof” - so many people have their shoes, which means they need to be great. This kind of interaction also produces free eWOM for Adidas, as people are tweeting pictures of their products and adding a hashtag, which is associated with the Adidas account and Adidas products.

Adidas Tennis

Wear the future. Send us a pic of your old Barricades for the chance to win
#Barricade2015 #BarricadeUpgrade <http://t.co/1Gn6tV2Qvb>

Here Adidas is advertising a new version of an established product with the help of a raffle. By posting an image of the previous versions of the shoe tweeters are given a chance to win the new product.

Reply tweets, already mentioned above, are mostly answers to inquiries about products and are really plain and to the point. They simply give out the information requested by a follower. It can be observed in the below tweets, which are almost identical. Interestingly, both these tweets pertain to the shoes and clothes made by Nike and worn by Roger Federer, while representing his nation - Switzerland at Davis Cup. Davis Cup is a tournament played by nations and has different format than regular tournaments. What matters is the fact that entire representation wears the same clothes and it is being arranged by National Tennis Associations, rather than by an athlete individually. This is probably why these outfits are not sold by the brand, which supplied them in a first place. But it also goes to show that most popular tennis players facilitate a great tool to showcase a brand's products, since most of the inquiries about availability of products are related to the ones that someone has seen on a player.

Nike Tennis

@ant_gac Hi Antoine, unfortunately these are not for sale. We will let you know if this changes.

The two tweets above are in response to product inquiries, Nike points out that the products are not for sale currently but vows to give notice should this change.

4.1.4. Information about products

What distinguishes “sale updates” from “information about products” is that people also want to know about features of products and their availability. While some of the questions are aimed at getting neutral information, such as for example availability of different colours, other are quite subjective. Below are two examples of tweets by Adidas Tennis: first is about launching different colours models and the second one is about how comfortable the shoes are. Stating that the new model is the most comfortable is rather a subjective opinion. It can obviously be the case that there are good reason why the new shoes are considered the most comfortable, but it is not possible to express it within 180 signs allowed in one tweet. Whatever Adidas’ explanation is, it does not change a fact that people ask about such features.

Adidas Tennis

@Alanm7778 Yes. They will launch in different colour ways.

This Adidas tweet is in response to a product inquiry and points out the variety in which the product will be offered when it goes on sale.

@MrVestibule The #Barricade2015 is our most comfortable Barricade to date.

This tweet points out the constant improvement Adidas is making to their products.

Nike Tennis

@JADLsince83 Yes, there is a 6-month wear guarantee in North America.

This tweet is in response to an inquiry regarding the guarantee on Nikes products. It points out the guarantee policy for the region from which the inquiry originated.

That is also why “information about products” has been transformed into a final coding framework “Promotion and Customer Service”, because these are types of questions and issues that used to be dealt with directly in stores. Having an opportunity to

ask such questions online, rather than in for example an e-mail also holds benefits for a brand. In case there is more than one person with the same inquiry there is no necessity to answer the same inquiry twice since followers can see the answer on the brands profile, therefore twitter allows brands to adress the enquiries of more than one person in one effort. It is equally useful if someone googles the question first, as social media, especially those who see a lots of engaged users, are shown in the beginning of search results. This is due to search engine optimisation, which gives priority to social media posts above, for example, website or fora results.

4.2. Motivation and Positive Reinforcement

Once it became apparent in what style and how Adidas and Nike engage with their customers through their Twitter account, it was essential to look into how relationship marketing opportunities are used on this platform. Knowing that most replies to the customers are concerned with customer service, whereas the original tweets serve a promotional purpose, it helps to determine what function social media play for sports brands. However the way and style in which these functions are carried out, says a lot about which opportunities of relationship marketing are fully taken advantage of. This can be observed both based on original tweets and replies, however a slightly different style is used by both sports brands who utilise it. What is meant by style is that tweets have different message, different levels of interest and concern for the customer, and different approach to present the product and the athletes. Two main styles that have been distinguished are: mentoring and positive reinforcement. An explanation of these two message styles is offered below.

The first style, mentoring can be understood as giving advice on how to achieve greatness. It needs to be viewed in the appropriate context, which is sport. Knowing the specific connection that sports fans have with their favorite teams, athletes of a discipline itself, sports brands can leverage this in various ways. One of them is through reinforcing the identification of a fan with athletes and creating sense of belonging in the athletic community. While Adidas and Nike are brands selling sports apparel and shoes they are giving their customers the feeling that they can achieve and push themselves as much as professional athletes. By tweeting pictures of athletes with motivational captions, the sports brands are able to give their customers something more than just mere products; they also try to sell a lifestyle and an aspiration. The words of one of Nike's founders, Bill Bowerman, express this lifestyle very well and also caption the style, in which these

mentoring tweets are posted: “If you have a body, you are an athlete”. Below are examples from both brands that show this mentoring style.

Adidas Tennis

Dedication knows no limit. @GenieBouchard <http://t.co/dhhPaAqfEt>

Command the clay. @RafaelNadal <http://t.co/xcZC1CFnPG>

The above tweets contain motivational messages and link to athletes who can be seen as motivational role models.

Nike Tennis

He came. He saw. He conquered. @TheDolgo is through to the Semi-Finals.

#bnpparibasopen <http://t.co/eSd0QdVMau>

Battling in the desert heat - @andreapethovic at #BNPPO2014 ^MM <http://t.co/qRIld0I1J90>

This tweet points out the success of an athlete in a tournament combined with a motivational phrase.

It is important to observe that all these are original tweets and they include a link to picture with a mentioned athlete wearing these brands' clothes. By using straight to the point, dynamic, emotionally charged slogans, Nike and Adidas mentor their customers, who can see their idols living their athlete's lives, and come to admire them even more. On another hand they can gain confidence and learn new virtues, typical to sport. At the same time these slogans are very universal and can be translated into any life discipline. Mentoring can be seen almost exclusively in an original tweets and connected with the players, in form of a photograph. There are exceptions to this rule, as in this reply tweet, in which mentoring can be observed is:

Nike Tennis

@TheRealJoweey On the road to greatness there are ups and downs but there is never a short cut. Let us know how your first match goes!

In this tweet Nike is addressing a rookie player, describing the challenges and demonstrating an interest in his development. The message towards him can also be seen as a general motivational message.

In this case, Nike shows the hardships that occur on a way to greatness, which encourages and gives confidence to take on a challenge. This is however, one of very few examples and therefore it is reasonable to say that mentoring was not actively pursued in replies. When it comes to the replies the second style is more prevalent in the tweets—positive reinforcement. It is characterised by giving positive feedback to the users, with which they interact, meaning: showing interest in their progress; their results; congratulating on success; and wishing good luck. Showing interest can be seen to be either in form of questions, such as “how did the game go?”, or just by encouraging to share pictures or updates to Adidas and Nike twitter.

Nike Tennis

@rachelhemmings6 Happy to hear the Air Max Cages are serving you well! How's your ankle feeling?

Here Nike refers to an earlier exchange in regard to their products and demonstrates an interest in the physical wellbeing of their followers which may have been a topic earlier on. This gives the impression of a very personal and motivating exchange.

@nikole90210 We're feeling it today too, but that's how you know you played hard. Keep up the good work out there.

This tweet addresses a common experience among athletes, sore muscles, and then describes them as a confirmation of intense efforts. These efforts are then praised and encouraged.

@SpenglerRobin Welcome back to the courts. Let us know how it goes out there!

This tweet welcomes an athlete back into action after some time away from the sport. By asking about an update about their progress interest is shown and further discussion is encouraged.

@btthechamp They can't return what they can't touch. Congrats on the match wins and those power serves, Brandon. Who's up next?

Adidas Tennis

@aaenaaa You're welcome! Enjoy.

In this tweet Adidas is courteously replying to a tweet directed at them. They show that they want to reply, even if it just to say enjoy to someone who uses their product. In this way, a better relationship is established, because their follower is being treated nicely and not ignored.

At this point it is worth to notice one of the major differences between Adidas and Nike when it comes to how they engage with the other users and how they present their athletes on Twitter. This difference consists in using the positive reinforcement style – while Nike indeed applies this style almost entirely in reply tweets, Adidas does so predominantly when posting original tweets, and on occasion in re-tweets. Since the players are mentioned mostly in such original tweets, that leaves Adidas usually using the positive reinforcement towards their athletes.

Adidas Tennis:

Novak Djokovic: bringing the heat to Miami. Congratulations @DjokerNole!
#SonyOpenTennis <http://t.co/zJ5C66ARV0>

In this tweet Adidas is congratulating a tennis player on his achievements in a tournament and praising him for them.

Good luck to all our athletes for the #AustralianOpen ^MM <http://t.co/KzWxsckjJr>

Here Adidas is wishing good fortunes to all the players partaking in the tournament.

Great style - @tsonga7 practicing on one of the #AustraliaOpen outside courts ^MM
<http://t.co/K9exZjed7D>

In this tweet Adidas is praising an athlete for his style during his practice before the tournament.

As can be seen, Adidas focuses more on positive reinforcement to their athletes, wishing them good luck and congratulating. This is almost never a case for Nike, which uses the mentoring style while mentioning the athletes. In that way Adidas directs the tweets at their athletes, while Nike mentions their athletes and direct the tweets at their followers. The reasons for it might be various, however one of explanations can be that Adidas approaches their players like if they were a fan – rooting for their favorites, while providing them with product, which is not really simultaneous (product promotion and applying positive reinforcement style). Nike, in turn, approaches their players as if they were a team. Athletes' successes are Nike's successes and vice versa. This way Nike can also appear more credible in their mentoring efforts and also shows athletes as part of their brand.

Next to positive reinforcement, it is worth identifying cases, in which this style is applied to atypical situations. These also constitute a part of the differences between the two brands. Two cases that are going to be elaborated on are the use of re-tweets and interacting with junior players. Different ways to give positive reinforcement can be seen in tweets from Adidas Tennis. While re-tweet function of Twitter is rarely used by any of the two brands, Adidas does so instead of a reply. This re-tweet quotes the re-tweeted tweet and adds word of encouragement or congratulations. This allows users coming to Adidas Tennis' Twitter to see the exchange between the brand and a user right in front of the page, so qualifying as an original tweet, rather than reply. This way it is arguably easier for others to see such exchange and share positive feedback, which Adidas is getting, with all of their followers. At the same time it is not so intimate, as the user in question does not actually engage in a conversation with the brand. This can therefore be seen more as kind of advertisement than a genuine interest in customers' opinions. Additionally, these replies are very short, generic, and not personalized to the user. Below is the example of how Adidas uses re-tweets to give positive reinforcement and engage with their followers, which illustrates the above mentioned point.

Adidas Tennis

No worries. RT @FilippoBaldi: Love my new clay court Adizero III. Thank you @adidastennis!!!! @AdidasItalia @adidas <http://t.co/43q8HgpyPu>

In this tweet Adidas is replying to the athlete that thanks them for his outfit. It provides transparency and shows the athlete and brand interacting.

The second case of applying a positive reinforcement style, which is interesting to take under consideration, is the fact that Nike Tennis engages in conversation not only with their current and potential customers, but also with junior players. These are young players, who are just starting to play tennis and about to enter a professional track. Despite the fact that they are not yet Nike's players, the brand engages with them and is interested in their progress. One of the most replied to users is @JamieMuscatel, who introduces himself as "passionate & aspiring tennis player" (Appendix 2). This gives young players a chance to connect with the brand, while Nike's players are their idols and examples, from which they learn. In the two examples positive reinforcement is shown to the aspiring athletes, congratulating and asking for more information, displaying genuine interest.

@theLWarren Nicely done! First tournament or hundredth, you don't mess around on the court. Let us know when you take your first title!

@TheRealJoweey Welcome to the game! Keep us posted on how your training goes. Do you have any matches coming up?

Both these tweets are an example of interacting with people who play tennis. They do not pertain strictly to the products or services that this brand sells, but it shows interest and offers advice. This makes the brand look more human and it helps to establish a relationship with the customers.

Engaging with junior players to induce positive reinforcement is one aspect of how opportunities of relationship marketing are seized by sports brands. It leads to the last part of the results, which is concerned with engagement with customers.

This final coding framework is probably the most used tool to communicate with followers on Twitter for both Adidas and Nike. While customer service constitutes an important part of using Twitter by brands, it is not enough to create big engagement online. Therefore in order to create engagement both Nike and Adidas appeal to their customers' experience of sports by positioning themselves as a mediator to this experience and also as motivation and reinforcement to undertake more challenges. This can take various forms, sometimes quite simple, such as asking about wellbeing, game results or congratulations. It is worth noting that interaction through reply tweets with others on

Twitter is quite different than original tweets, in which tennis players are mentioned. The original tweets can be seen as advertising slogans, whereas reply tweets are rather focused on the above mentioned simple form of asking questions. Throughout the observation only one of the reply tweets to a fan by Adidas Tennis mentioned an athlete. Another interesting observation was an exchange between Adidas Tennis and a twitter user which extended beyond one tweet and can therefore be considered a conversation.

Adidas Tennis

@sook19 Play time also affects wear. We'll have to wait and see.

This tweet is a response to a follower, who asks about durability of their product. Adidas is being honest by saying that they cannot know the answer to this question. It shows the brand as transparent, one which is not afraid of admitting that they do not have an answer.

@sook19 You asked, and we deliver. Have a look at @Djokernole's #Barricade shoes after winning Wimbledon. <https://t.co/LB7LXkhvC4>

This tweet shows the shoes of a tennis player after winning a big tournament. It is something they do not need to do, but since their followers are interested in how they look, they make an extra effort to showcase their dedication.

Since this is the only type of such an exchange in the entire sample, it is worth mentioning what the conversation is about. After asking to see how shoes look like after the game, Adidas Tennis has delivered a picture of Novak Djokovic's shoes after winning a major title at the Wimbledon Tournament. This displays a great deal of commitment from Adidas, as this can be seen as going one step further, giving a special opportunity to connect the fan with the winner of a tournament through shoes a brand produces for him. This creates the symbolic idea that these are the shoes you win big games with. It is noteworthy that this message is delivered with a human voice as it connects an athlete with a user, removing the brand from the interaction on a subconscious level. In that way it is an example of relationship marketing, because it is personal, it shows the human voice and a direct relationship.

4.2.1. Asking followers about wellbeing and their game results

Most of the interactions between brands and users are much simpler than the example outlined above and connect with a Twitter user on more casual basis. The majority of

tweets were either strictly tennis related or concerned more general topics. Since it was sometimes impossible to distinguish between the two, these initial coding categories were often overlapping. The examples below illustrate this point.

Adidas Tennis

@GailMcGeachy1 Thank you for sharing. Let us know how it went!

Here Adidas thanks the twitter user for sharing something with them and in response shows interest in their situation.

This tweet is about a tennis wear purchased from Adidas and as a followup the customer was asked for an update on how a game in the garment went. In a this situation it is difficult to determine whether this tweet can be counted as game results, as has been demonstrated above. Adidas frequently creates and perpetuates the idea that wearing certain shoes or certain clothes can affect your play. In contrast to this it is quite clear that Nike, in the example below, is asking about game results.

Nike Tennis

@ili4n4b How did it go on the courts today?

In this tweet Nike shows an interest in their followers progress in tennis. By asking a question like this they show that they care for the customers and the athletic community in general. By asking a question further interaction is encouraged.

Nike asks about how it went on the courts, which means it is a tennis related tweet. It is of course assumed that both Nike and Adidas Twitter accounts' will not engage in a random conversation with somebody on Twitter, as is probably true for most brands on Twitter. However some can relate to tennis and a/or a specific match more and other less so. Throughout the sample Nike was not observed having an interaction with a person that was not clearly discussing either game results or performance on court.

4.2.2. Congratulations

Both Adidas and Nike often express congratulations on their accounts. These are always in a form of a reply tweet and are responses to people sharing their results or achievements with the two sports brands on Twitter.

Nike Tennis

@baileyrowsell94 Well done, Bailey. Now let's see what you can do in 2015.

This tweet praises the athlete for their achievement and further motivates them by referring to the upcoming season, which represents new challenges and opportunities.

Adidas Tennis

@KTanushevski Wow! Keep it up and let us know which your favourite is

In this tweet Adidas is impressed by the athletes performance and asks about their preference in regard to an earlier exchange.

The hashtag #WhereIPlay also plays a big part so it was coded as a separate category as it was always referring to the same kind of post. These posts included users sending a picture of the courts on which they play. This expanded to the degree that Nike Tennis has compiled a list of the most beautiful depictions of courts. Nike was so invested in this hashtag that one of the professional tennis players they sponsor included this hashtag in their tweet, which shows how engaged athletes can be with their brand on Twitter.

4.3. Customer Engagement

While it can be challenging to distinguish customers from other followers, all those who engage with a brand in a conversation about the products are perceived as (potential) customers. In contrast to followers such as players' fans, junior players, other brand's accounts, interaction with customers is based primarily on products. That can be, as already mentioned, seen as mere customer service, however it is still important how engaged the brands are and in what way they engage with customers. Reply tweets from Adidas and Nike can be divided into interest, advice giving, and solution seeking. These categorisations for reply tweets are going to be presented further, but before this happens, it needs to be stated that original tweets are also a form of engaging with customers, as mere exposure to promotional content arguably already engages a Twitter user. Nonetheless it is in the replies and re-tweets that this can be especially important, as without regular interaction, long-term relationships are hard to maintain. Showing interest

can have many forms; it can either be a question concerning the products, satisfaction, or about personal results and progress. It can also be a form of positive reinforcement, by encouraging customers to stay in touch or share pictures of themselves in certain circumstances. Below is an example of how Nike shows interest after a picture has been sent using a hashtag they announced, #WhereIPlay, where everybody was encouraged to send a picture of a court, on which they play.

Nike Tennis

@itsEmmaHello It's our way of saying thanks for sharing such an epic photo with us. Keep 'em coming!

In this tweet it appears that the follower has received some kind of gratitude from Nike. Nike clarifies that this was due to the image the follower had shared and at the same time encourages this and other followers to keep sharing images with Nike.

@em_ingham Don't worry, you can still pick up a new RF hat here: <http://t.co/JMos3a54V4>. Which colour are you going for?

In this tweet Nike responds to an inquiry and points out the availability of their products while at the same time showing an interest in the preference of the customer and by asking a question provoking further interaction.

Adidas Tennis asks questions and sparks interaction as well, however it is more product oriented, as questions are often about favourite items from a collection. Both brands are also using informal language, appearing friendly, and more human. The following tweet perfectly captions this “humanising” factor:

Nike Tennis

@zacharydemeritt Oh that's where they went! We've been walking around barefoot all day. Which pair did you grab?

This tweet gives a human voice to the brand, because it personifies the brand. Since an organization cannot walk barefoot, it alludes to Nike being a human being and walking barefoot. It is a playful way to respond to somebody, which by using humor they seem even more human.

5. Discussion and conclusion

While it is difficult to state exactly how sports brands integrate relationship marketing on their social media platforms, some statements can be made regarding the relationship marketing aspects currently being utilised.

Results indicate that indeed Nike and Adidas are both committed to engage their fans on Twitter and present them with an opportunity to connect with players.

5.1. Promotion and Customer Service

First, it needs to be stated that both Nike and Adidas use their Twitter accounts to promote their products and they do so often by mentioning an athlete. They do so by creating advertising slogans that relate to a certain tennis player. In this way they show how everybody can become an athlete just like these tennis players. The slogans are further categorised as motivational and positively reinforcing the effort and performance for brand's customers.

In the interaction with fans, both Nike and Adidas choose to present more of a human voice and talk to their followers by striking a casual conversation, about their wellbeing and game results. As Kelleher (2009) points out this style of interaction creates positive feelings such as trust, commitment and satisfaction, which are an ideal facilitator to relationship marketing (Morgan & Hunt, 1990; Williams & Chinn, 2010). They tend to foster a long-lasting relationship, for which relationship marketing aims. It seems that this tone is very much inherent to social media, as it is normal to engage in social exchanges with people with whom trusting and committed relations exist on social media. However, it could also be that this tone is intentionally used by sports brands in order to optimize their relationship marketing efforts.

However, much of the interaction with customers is strictly related to customer service. As stated, most of a brand's followers are people who have purchased something from that brand and who look for special discounts and promotions (Harris & Dennis, 2011). The results show that this is often the case, as people ask about availability of products and their variations. They also ask about products' features and durability. Relationship marketing efforts with these topics can be classified as two of Evans and Laskins (1994) relationship marketing inputs, namely building a service partnership and understanding customer expectations.

Twitter makes it possible for sports brands to react to tweets instantly, which is undoubtedly something customers used to desire and nowadays expect. Satisfying this expectation can be perceived as part of Evans and Laskins (1994) relationship marketing outputs, namely customer satisfaction. Similarly frequent inquiries in regard to the same issue or product may give the sports brand a chance to quickly adapt, resulting in another of Evans & Laskins (1994) relationship marketing outputs, quality products.

Additionally, the many-to-many communication paradigm can be observed, as one person asking a question regarding some products is visible on Twitter feed and can be read by anybody, not only the person asking the question. This also shows that e-commerce is indeed a vital part of a brand's expansion on social media. By using SNS for customer service, brands "live where their customers live".

Furthermore, by engaging with followers on Twitter, both Adidas and Nike generate traffic and content online. This serves the purpose of creating eWOM and attracting friends and followers of those who engage with brands on Twitter by exposing them to the exchange and their messages.

Lastly, promotion can be seen as organising Q&A sessions with players for fans. Despite the fact that those tweets were not included in the analysis, due to the fact that they were not authored by either Nike Tennis or Adidas Tennis, but they demonstrate that brands offer exclusive content for their followers on Twitter. This ties in with Hollebeeks (2011) notion of activation since a Q&A session requires the Twitter user to actively invest time, energy and effort to reap the benefits offered by the sports brands online social media presence. Additionally it shows that the brands are aware of the new paradigm of the attention economy and that they integrate this by using traditional marketing events such

as a Q&A session as a motivator for their audience to interact more using their Twitter accounts. Additionally, it shows that the brands are aware of the new paradigm of the attention economy,

5.2. Motivation and Positive Reinforcement

This big theme has been the most utilised when it comes to integrating tennis players into the conversation. This is also where some of the most important facets of relationship marketing, namely trust and commitment, are most visible. By showing that tennis players wear Adidas and Nike sportswear, these brands can establish a trustworthy reputation for their products' quality. One of the most prominent examples in the sample was a conversation with a user showing them a pair of shoes, in which a player had won a tournament. This shows that if the professionals, who win the most prestigious competitions, and who surely choose the best clothes and shoes to compete in, have decided to wear Adidas or Nike products, then these products are reliable and trustworthy. The example with the shoes also shows that in the way that Hollebeek (2011) terms it, the sports brands' followers are passionate about the brand. For Hollebeek (2011) passion relates to emotional investment, enthusiasm and pride, which is clearly demonstrated by a post that shows not only the brand's product, but also the success associated with it.

Motivation is used as a marketing strategy especially by Nike, which is probably the most popular for its slogan "Just do it!". All of their marketing efforts are focused on making people realise that they can achieve whatever they want. Countless examples of tweets in which they talk about greatness, achievements, determination, and perseverance, are examples of how they want to present themselves. Nike is just a facilitator of this greatness, but the athletes are the ones who truly emanate these values. They are the ones who fans of Nike should aspire to.

Nike does so by congratulating and cheering people to take further challenges and test themselves. Adidas is less motivation oriented, as the brand itself has different values.

Moreover, both brands make the most of having leading tennis players as their brand ambassadors. Quite a big portion of all tweets directed at both Nike and Adidas was about clothes and shoes that the players wear and if they are available for a wider public. This means that their advertising works - athletes who wear their products are seen by the public and then sports brands are asked whether it is possible to buy the same pieces.

Also, tennis players are put on the pedestal in every motivational tweet. While talking about achieving greatness, pushing oneself further and further, a picture and a mention of an athlete is always present.

5.3. Limitations

While this study has focused on how brands use relationship marketing in their online strategies, it would greatly benefit from looking at both sides of this relationship. Even if big efforts are expended in order to evoke trust and engagement online, this does not necessarily stem from marketing strategies alone. By looking at the entire conversation around a certain sports product, some insights can be gained into whether the facets of relationship marketing are indeed at work.

One of the main points of relationship marketing was to gain brand loyalty. By looking at the top two most successful brands, it is difficult to state whether the brand loyalty that is potentially observed is due to their efforts of relationship marketing. It took years to establish such positions for both Nike and Adidas, therefore in order to see the entire picture, much more detailed research should take place into how this position was established in a first place.

5.4. Conclusion

To conclude, relationship marketing is integrated through social media as marketing strategies of sports brands by utilising opportunities it gives. In order to establish the most important parts of relationship, such as trust, commitment and engagement, Twitter accounts of Nike and Adidas are structured in a way to evoke these feelings. Sports brands use these opportunities by creating exclusive content, serve as customer service, where customers can get reliable information, but also act as a mentor, as someone who cheers people up to give even more.

Engagement is an important part of the strategy, but at the same time it is important that arguably it is easier for big brands to attract and engage followers. These brands are almost expected to perform their marketing well, due to the fact that they supply the biggest sports stars with clothing and shoes. This gives a great advantage to Adidas and

Nike, because fans of athletes are likely to search for and look at their sports idols on their channels.

Athletes are the main focus of both Adidas and Nike content on Twitter. It can be said that a great majority of original tweets is devoted to tennis players. Their picture is used whenever possible. They also receive congratulations and for example birthday wishes from both sports brands, as well as take part in Q&A session with fans on Nike and Adidas Twitter feeds.

Different strategies are used when it comes to reply tweets which represent an interaction with the followers. Tennis players are then rarely a focal point of the exchange, unless their name is mentioned in connection to clothes or shoes they wore. This is however treated as selling and customer service. In the end it is giving information about their products and their availability.

Because this study was focused on finding out how sports brands utilise relationship marketing in their marketing strategies on social media, it is also worth investigating how their strategies are perceived by their audience. Do people trust the brands? Do they see themselves as engaged or rather casual followers? What features do they look for in a sports brand Twitter account or other social media, and which features do they use most? All these questions can give insights into how people want and expect the sports brands to conduct themselves on social media.

Additionally, another study, which could be carried out is to see what kind of perceptions do people form around tennis players through the way they are portrayed on sports brands social media. Since sports brands and tennis players are so closely connected, the kind of strategies they take to promote each other can have a great impact on people's perception of both tennis players and sports brands.

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Appendix 1

200 TWEETS FROM @NIKETENNIS FROM 14.01.2014

Confidence captured. @RogerFederer <http://t.co/v2eWFXVqkd>

Get To Know: @GrigorDimitrov <http://t.co/ZJHuzhyf6S>

Ready your attack. @RogerFederer <http://t.co/awnpn1fhyD>

@vanessa_zemp Every serve is an opportunity and champions don't let opportunity pass them by.

Way to put in work to master the game, Vanessa

@DaveFromuth Sounds like you have the game to back up the look. Nicely done, Dave.

@btthechamp They can't return what they can't touch. Congrats on the match wins and those power serves, Brandon. Who's up next?

@ili4n4b The sun is up, and now's the time to step your game up. Let us know how your practice goes!

@DaveFromuth Nice work! How'd you guys hit 'em?

The lighter side. Take a sneak peek at Grigor Dimitrov's day with Nike Tech Pack. Full story coming soon. <http://t.co/4IIDgQQmn1>

@CasteleinLieze Hi Lieze, since each shoe is built from scratch, we can't expedite orders but we promise your iDs will be worth the wait!

Dedication knows no limit. @GenieBouchard <http://t.co/dhhPaAqfEt>

Command the clay. @RafaelNadal <http://t.co/8p7uwHqxeh>

Domina la arcilla. @RafaelNadal <http://t.co/xcZC1CFnPG>

@zacharydemeritt Oh that's where they went! We've been walking around barefoot all day. Which pair did you grab?

@MarkTaylor_14 How'd it go out there, Mark? Are you headed for another turn at the state championships this year?

@Run2beFit Looks like a champ. How'd he hit 'em?

@MarkTaylor_14 Good luck!

@OliverPeyron We hear you. We want you to break serves, not laces. Get in touch with the retailer and, if that doesn't work, let us know.

De vuelta a tus raíces. La historia de @Xavigasso comenzó en Barcelona. Comparte tu cancha/ciudad, usando #WhereIPlay <http://t.co/IFuF0d1NIN>

Back to your roots. @Xavigasso's story began in Barcelona, Spain. Share your court, name the city & tag #WhereIPlay. <http://t.co/Ahajq4wg3j>

@OliverPeyron Hey Oliver, let's see what we can do to help. Have you contacted the retailer?

@MichaelVergara8 That is one clean looking pair of ZV9Ts, Michael. When do they see the court?

@BobDouangkesone Nice work, Bobby. You're racking up that Fuel! How'd it go on the courts?

@mikekitson07 No shame in your shoe game. Looks like you've got some space open for the ZV9.5T and the Lunar Ballistecs.

Up your game. @Vika7 <http://t.co/M0cxdDkdZp>

@shubhodeepd37 If you're trying on mobile, just go right to our main page and Vika's answers will be visible.

@shubhodeepd37 Hi, the answers are on our account page if you click to see "All" rather than "No Replies." Try the link again & scroll down.

Looking for the #AskVika answers? Check them out here: <https://t.co/Ew2TKd0aPq>

@proleartthreat1 Hi Paddy, the answers are here: <https://t.co/06Ql63kj85>

Thanks for all your questions! I have to go but hopefully we can do this again soon!

@mich122 I play ping pong and basketball.

@cocoleflosa HELLO PARAGUAY!

@1stSingles 62 lbs.

@iheartrf Yeah.

@cindavisi Hi Cindy! Hope you're having a nice day.

@lazersneverdie Hi Angela.

@Sbayy Barcelona and PSG.

@reubenmulhern Oh yeah. I was so nervous. I cried when I saw Steffi Graf.

@barrman Hi, Larry ;)

@razmot_ goodnight!

@xenon21 A Gold medal.

@WhiteThesseion Thank you!

@n2faith1 I can't remember but you've got 13 more years to get to 6'0 like me!

@FallingSlowly93 Hi there!

@AllyKumail If you've done the hard work, the results will come.

@AllyKumail You've got to trust yourself and trust what you do in practice and just go and play.

Don't over think it.

@WhitneyWofford Yo, they feel sweeter. They're lighter and really stable.

I've got time for a few more! Keep them coming with #AskVika.

@Julie_JH6 I'll continue to work on my passions, my foundation - The Dreaming Heart - and some other creative projects.

@Asicran_i After Wimbledon, recovering from that injury gave me confidence.

@lawanda50 I love to cook fresh fish. I need to cook a little more.

@tennisfan200 Listen to music and watch movies. I'm learning chess.

@charlotte_rsd Barbados and Hawaii.

@zazos101 All over the place, I don't know where some of my trophies are.

@Asicran_i I respect and love @GabbyReece.

@Ichsanno Chocolate ice cream.

@Fedy_Carliter He's 4 -- that's what we think.

@Garrotera72 HELLLLLOOOOOOOOOO!

@AaronH02056 I love dogs. I had a cat but I just rescued a dog, Duke, so I have to say dogs.

@NowMarc Friends because I learned English from it. But I love a lot of TV shows right now. You should watch Real Husbands of Hollywood.

@Nigogu I would create a genie.

@Advicegiver18 I love to work on different projects. My passion right now is helping kids with my foundation - The Dreaming Heart.

@Mike_Igor That's so sweet. Practice makes perfect.

@karan_jaws I'd take @RafaelNadal's forehand. For sure.

@totytala13 7. Seafood. Black.

@GiantDuck I'd love to play with @RafaelNadal but @Gael_Monfils is my partner in crime. We'd take on anyone.

@Dr_Rhodium Comedy. I love comedies, like Think Like A Man by @KevinHart4real. For real.

@ihearttrf Hi!

@cmportland RocknRolla. It's funny.

@zazos101 Indian Wells and Doha.

@saboortweets The @AustralianOpen. The happy Slam.

@richie_arn247 When I was a kid in France growing up.

@alliek_allie My first time @AustralianOpen win.

@hausof_eric @Beyonce's new album.

@richelle_ap I Heard It Through The Grapevine by Marvin Gaye.

@Asicran_i Teleporting - I'd save so much time and money on travel.

@ADRio619 Ice cream -- any ice cream -- a lot of it!

@StepanBubak I watch a little bit. I watched the biathlon and am very proud of the Belarusian team and I love to watch hockey.

@SalehOmer My biggest goal is to win more Slams.

@AlessandroLaza I'm at Nike right now and that's what we're working on!

@EmmaCarlton6 Recovering from injury.

@Nigogu My sense of humor. I'm really funny, don't you think?

@tennisfan200 I prefer Batman. He's cute.

@gloriaL73 Steffi Graf was my idol and inspired me to play tennis. Off court - Michael Jordan and

@RealRoyJonesJr.

@BiancaMuhl I'm learning drums at the moment. It's really challenging.

@ManBboda Three: Russian, Belarussian and English.

@Razor_Oz Olympics in Rio

Ok, it's time to answer some questions! Let's do this! #AskVika <http://t.co/pa9hg1h4UY>

Ask A Champion. On Feb 18th at 3:15pm PST, @Vika7 will answer your questions. Submit questions now and tag #AskVika. <http://t.co/NHUXZpIJQv>

@btthechamp Congrats on the team effort! Now you've got a week to hit the court & get back in your rhythm. Each tournament is a clean slate.

@giacorana Hey Giacomo, the Q&A is happening right here on Twitter at 3:15pm PST, Feb 18th. Submit questions and tag them #AskVika.

Ask a Champion. Tomorrow at 3:15pm PST, @Vika7 will answer your questions. Submit questions now and tag #AskVika. <http://t.co/B5MSDIQWx6>

Get To Know: @GenieBouchard <http://t.co/wns1c1KUOI>

@ashishu1 We agree. Sunday mornings too! How'd you hit them?

Endless love. @Mityrica plays Lagarto, Brazil. Show us your court, call out your city and tag it #WhereIPlay. <http://t.co/vAQqREKnZp>

@flawanddisorder Correct again! We're currently updating new color blocking options on the ZV9T iDs but they'll be back online 2/24.

@flawanddisorder Hey Brennan, good eye. Grigor was wearing the previous Zoom Vapor 9 Tour model shoes.

@RyanLutz07 Those are some nice looking shoes, Ryan. How'd they feel on the court?

@bec_1D23 Hi, unfortunately, the Legendary Tight Print isn't available online in your area. Have you tried the Melbourne Central store?

@MarkyMark191083 Ummm, no comment...

@CCSMendoza Hi Conrad, we made this pair especially for Roger Federer. Unfortunately they're not available to the public.

Get To Know: @Madison_Keys <http://t.co/VXAuhqouzG>

@TheRealJoweey On the road to greatness there are ups and downs but there is never a short cut. Let us know how your first match goes!

@BobDouangkesone Well done, parents! Keep us posted on what you and @NikeFuel can accomplish together.

@TheRealJoweey Back on the court again? Nicely done. Keep it up!

Every serve. Every point. Make your impact. @RafaelNadal <http://t.co/Lh5ZvXVG7C>

@jenny_slota This must not be your first batch - that's a perfect bandana fold. You're definitely ready for the court!

@JamieMuscatel We're working on some new color blocking options right now. They'll be available online in late February.

@TheRealJoweey Welcome to the game! Keep us posted on how your training goes. Do you have any matches coming up?

@TheRealJoweey Impressive collection! When does it see the court?

@ryan4days We hear you, it's a big decision. Anything we can do to help?

@JamieMuscatel Those iDs are pretty amazing, nice touch with the laces. We can't pick a favorite,

Jamie. They're all so good!

@theLWarren Nicely done! First tournament or hundredth, you don't mess around on the court. Let us know when you take your first title!

@alecmbelt We request the highest of fives. Way to suit up properly for the court.

@alecmbelt Even the best need to get back into their rhythm after a break. All that matters is that you took to the court. Well done, Alec.

@theLWarren Hey Logan, how'd it go out there over the weekend?

@alecmbelt Welcome back to the battle. How'd it go out there?

@richie_arn247 What sets great players apart is their ability to learn from each match. There's always a lesson, even in frustration.

@delpotrojuan Tomorrow's best learning from today's best.

@JamieMuscatel Well that all depends, which pair brought you the most wins?

@CasteleinLieve Hey Lieze, we're updating the color options for the ZV9T iD. It will be available again on Feb 24th.

This week the game starts again. @delPetroJuan <http://t.co/3Tg0TvTPhI>

Back where it all began. @MariaSharapova reopens the court where she first learned to play.

#WhereIPlay #PlayRussian <http://t.co/78KSe4qq7p>

Find your rhythm. @SerenaWilliams <http://t.co/bVrhQIoR7b>

@rachelhemmings6 Happy to hear the Air Max Cages are serving you well! How's your ankle feeling?

@MattiKuusisaari Looks like he could be pretty quick on the court but how's his backhand?

@Sherisse09 Let your passion for the game drive you, Sherisse. It's what drives us.

@Jenny_Boumanns Hey Jenny, be sure to send us a picture of your @MariaSharapova gear when it hits the courts!

@btthechamp Hey Brandon, how'd your matches go against Wright St?

@theLWarren Styled from head to toe - you're ready to play! We'll check back in on Monday to see how your matches went. Good luck!

Make something of your Monday. <http://t.co/INy6lslh0P>

@theLWarren Welcome to the court, Logan! Keep us posted on how it goes out there this

weekend. What gear are you wearing?

@ili4n4b No better way to start the week than getting to the courts. How'd it go out there in the cold and wind?

@itsEmmaHello It's our way of saying thanks for sharing such an epic photo with us. Keep 'em coming!

@richie_arn247 Belated congrats on 35! You're seriously dedicated to the game. With that passion, you'll claim your 40th title in no time.

@richie_arn247 Let discipline be your advantage. When's your next tournament? Let us know how to journey to 35 titles goes!

@rachelhemmings6 Let the countdown begin! Keep us posted on how those feel on court.

@rachelhemmings6 That's a good looking pair of Cages, Rachel. When do they see the court?

The court is calling. Show us your court, call out your city & tag it #WhereIplay.

<http://t.co/KtVo0N4o8z>

@snelllll_7up Nice work. Hit the courts and start earning those Fuel points!

@nikole90210 We're feeling it today too, but that's how you know you played hard. Keep up the good work out there.

@tianya79 @tenniswarehouse Hi, unfortunately these were made specifically for Roger Federer and are not for sale to the public.

@rogerfederer Nothing neutral about these.

The Finals Days In Melbourne: Behind The Scenes @RogerFederer @RafaelNadal

<http://t.co/EXgjW2uLs7> <http://t.co/eBEJoMyCgR>

RT @rogerfederer: Exciting <http://t.co/IQZbaEv4ES>

@danboriboun Those look even better in person than they did on the screen, Danny. When do they make their court debut?

@DamienZuch Sounds like a great plan - the road to victory always starts somewhere. Let us know how those Ballistecs work for you!

@btthechamp Sounds like you're ready to own the court this weekend! Keep us posted on how things go against Wright St.

@champbox Happy to hear you're back on the courts. Way to get out there and put in some work!

@cherryyc @annaliese_ah Hi Anna and Cherry, the Premier Maria hat is available in gray here:

<http://t.co/i9cvQB4ZzM>

@DamienZuch Welcome back to the game, Damien! When do you hit the courts?

@btthechamp Stealthy shoes allow for stealthy play. Nice ZV9T iDs, Brandon. When do they see the court?

@champbox Happy to hear it! Are you dominating the court in practice or are you getting some matches in?

Disappointment fuels the determined. <http://t.co/PfHaf14vpJ>

The heart has no limits. #justdoit #LiNa #AusOpen <http://t.co/9oyh7U0qUC>

His first center court victory but not his last. Introducing Alexander Zverev, the #AusOpen Boys' Singles Champion. <http://t.co/ogx6BHewls>

@dSeverence Hey Daniel, Roger's in Zoom Vapor 9.5 Tours & Rafa's in Air Max Courtballistec 4.3s. Check them out here: <http://t.co/wjWFW9y1nJ>

@stuson_ Hey Stuart, Roger is wearing the new Men's Zoom Vapor 9.5 Tour, check them out here: <http://t.co/l7cYTmuZBm>

Let no one stop you. @RafaelNadal #AusOpen <http://t.co/hRycJqxAu8>

Rivalries aren't measured in matches but by how many times the impossible occurs.

@RafaelNadal @RogerFederer #AusOpen <http://t.co/a0CfCu1Mt5>

@ghostfacekamath Hey Jay, Grigor is wearing the Nike Men's Zoom Vapor 9 Tour.

Return for more. #LiNa #AusOpen <http://t.co/ii93g6pKmc>

Make this your moment. @GenieBouchard #LiNa #AusOpen

@SpenglerRobin We're happy to be able to style your game. When your next match?

@Alexanelli And we love you back.

@SpenglerRobin Welcome back to the courts. Let us know how it goes out there!

Impose your game. @RogerFederer #AusOpen <http://t.co/BG6lJulOHI>

Fight to the finish. @RafaelNadal #AusOpen <http://t.co/IDLq57ghf0>

RT @nikestore: Back like it never left. The Air Tech Challenge II 'Hot Lava' returns Friday, 1/24.

Details: <http://t.co/FhrHlbEgwr> <http://t...>

Show the world you are ready. @GenieBouchard #AusOpen <http://t.co/sJLra4yXm0>

Know what you came for. #LiNa #AusOpen <http://t.co/UIDj6QQxAP>

Melbourne In Action: Week 1. #LiNa #AusOpen <http://t.co/Dedt0LqD6Z>

Melbourne In Action: Week 1. @SerenaWilliams #AusOpen <http://t.co/eFpYtWyER3>

RT @nikesportswear: Take a closer look at the Kicks of the Week: the Air Tech Challenge II.
<http://t.co/WLKSKYIZWM>

RT @nikesportswear: Hot like lava. Back like it never left. The Air Tech Challenge II returns 1.24.
<http://t.co/gNE82Vgtwd>

Melbourne In Action: Week 1. @GrigorDimitrov #AusOpen <http://t.co/NvQYTzBOYM>

Melbourne In Action: Week 1. @MariaSharapova #AusOpen <http://t.co/fSxGc1tH1O>

Melbourne In Action: Week 1. @RogerFederer #AusOpen <http://t.co/JFwElkzxzN>

Melbourne In Action: Week 1. @Vika7 #AusOpen <http://t.co/5jp2naZwwx>

Melbourne In Action: Week 1. @RafaelNadal #AusOpen <http://t.co/Yq6U1ZZf9V>

Heating up. @RogerFederer #AusOpen <http://t.co/xgewYyK82o>

Strictly business. @RafaelNadal #AusOpen <http://t.co/fNEvPDS1Oo>

When the stage gets bigger, your drive gets stronger. @GrigorDimitrov #AusOpen
<http://t.co/gxuy0hdbPu>

One step closer. @Vika7 #AusOpen <http://t.co/4e2soV3l93>

Next level. Ready for more. @GenieBouchard #AusOpen <http://t.co/2AqZyDDfkE>

Power through. #LiNa #AusOpen <http://t.co/0GbaJdfZfp>

No cooling off. @RafaelNadal #AusOpen <http://t.co/A60zwwyDyV>

17 straight in Melbourne. @Vika7 #AusOpen <http://t.co/D2TWG6Kgwg>

Rise to the occasion. @GrigorDimitrov #AusOpen <http://t.co/fOq8l6Eguz>

Work. @RogerFederer #AusOpen <http://t.co/Elcnn6WN25>

Standing strong. @MariaSharapova #AusOpen <http://t.co/YbclpbMdXw>

Heat tested. Battle ready. @SerenaWilliams #AusOpen <http://t.co/i76kJrnCu2>

@gordonfode Great picture - who are they rooting for?

@choiruul Nice kicks. When do they see the court?

Forward attack. @RogerFederer #AusOpen <http://t.co/mdKY2C3x1x>

@_casey_mia How'd your matches go in your new ZV9.5Ts?

@1Shippy Those look great to us. Send us a picture when they arrive!

@em_ingham Don't worry, you can still pick up a new RF hat here: <http://t.co/JMos3a54V4>. Which color are you going for?

Designed For Victory: @SerenaWilliams NA: <http://t.co/BBwAME4Gt7> WE: <http://t.co/nELttHyaMB>
<http://t.co/v7NVJeK0RO>

Unmatched Heights: @RogerFederer takes the court setting the record for consecutive Major appearances at 57. #AusOpen <http://t.co/u250Xqp3OW>

200 TWEETS FROM @ADIDASTENNIS FROM 20.09.2013

RT @adidas: A cooling revolution is about to drop. 01.04.2014. <http://t.co/17c1KEvHRT> #Climachill
<http://t.co/ozPr3r8kG0>

Novak Djokovic: bringing the heat to Miami. Congratulations @DjokerNole! #SonyOpenTennis
<http://t.co/zJ5C66ARV0>

Are you ready for the ultimate battle today? Good luck @DjokerNole #SonyOpenTennis
<http://t.co/Q2CCf0ICMN>

@tommy_n76 Good question. Different rules apply to different tournaments. Hope this helps.
.@TheDolgo will be keeping his cool on court today in the quarter-finals. #SonyOpenTennis
#Climachill <http://t.co/459I1MPoBx>

Fabio can always take the heat. #ClimaChill #SonyOpenTennis <http://t.co/g5Nb3TXfYL>

When every degree counts, I choose #Climachill. #SonyOpenTennis @tsonga7
<http://t.co/wuwW7kS62K>

@PaulikNZ More info to come soon... Stay tuned.

@AndyMurrayFans The #Climachill polo comes in several colours.

@AndyMurrayFans Yes it is at the 2014 #SonyOpenTennis.

Drop your temperature, not your game. #SonyOpenTennis #Climachill <http://t.co/NBnDfQAKVn>

Drop your temperature, raise your game. @TheDolgo is all in for #SonyOpenTennis #Climachill
<http://t.co/YwPz6uZ9VK>

RT @adidas: The future of active-cooling technology... coming soon. <http://t.co/4ZJDo3Jp6v>
#Climachill <http://t.co/8ScTKdGmKZ>

@aaenaaa @Analvanovic That's awesome! Enjoy it.

No holding back @DjokerNole. #BNPPO14 2014 champion. #IndianWells <http://t.co/lwxvncSK5P>

Her first title of 2014! Congratulations to the #BNPPO14 champion, @flavia_pennetta!

#IndianWells <http://t.co/kmwBWzK83r>

@sam_barry1992 Enjoy!

.@DjokerNole has booked himself a place in the #IndianWells finals. Think he can go all the way?

#bnpparibasopen <http://t.co/DO6oRjyZOB>

With that win, @flavia_pennetta is through to the #IndianWells final. Bring it on! #BNPPO14

#bnpparibasopen <http://t.co/3Sh2Ocg9Cw>

.@DjokerNole can't wait for the #IndianWells semi-finals. Can you? #bnpparibasopen

<http://t.co/tkysBkrAUX>

It's quarter-final time at #bnpparibasopen. Are you going to be behind @DjokerNole in his bid for
the semis? <http://t.co/CAe5hKpG9U>

He Came, He Saw, He Conquered. @TheDolgo is through to the Semi-Finals. #bnpparibasopen
<http://t.co/eSd0QdVMau>

No stopping Ernests Gulbis. See you in the quarter-finals! #BNPPO14 <http://t.co/zfY9CkTh59>

More focussed than ever. @TheDolgo is through to the quarter-finals. #BNPPO14

<http://t.co/5aC4887XfP>

Jerzy checks out how his new @adidaseyewear shades are looking. Don't worry Jerzy, looking
great. <http://t.co/h5arKw1jFa>

Match point for @FerVerdasco. Beware the Fearhand! ^DC <http://t.co/SdmI9uHc4d>

.@KikiMladenovic holding the first tennis shoe @adidas ever made. Be careful, don't drop it...

<http://t.co/5vqsainUvT>

Battling in the desert heat - @andreapetkovic at #BNPPO2014 ^MM <http://t.co/qRld011J90>

Check out @KikiMladenovic and @Flavia_pennetta in their new @adidasOriginals shades!

<http://t.co/FlfgPRxIYY>

Men's main draw @BNPPARIBASOPEN kicks off today. 1st up on Stadium Court 1 is @JackSock

^DC <http://t.co/dRLq5AMTcm>

It's hot out here at #IndianWells... Pick those shades wisely @MonicaAce93!

<http://t.co/Rc5iNJ4tAY>

<http://t.co/Nw5MW60Dyn> - Working the backhands - @sorana_cirstea - that's what I call power and control ^MM

Serve and kill shot drill by @sorana_cirstea. ^DC <http://t.co/w7QBK0WMW2>

Check out @AngeliqueKerber getting ready for the morning session at #BNPPO14 ^MM

<http://t.co/wTR6ls5YWF>

Early morning practice for @sorana_cirstea. ^DC <http://t.co/6SdMgNnWsd>

Getting used to playing with the lights on - @sorana_cirstea at #BNPPO14 ^MM

<http://t.co/kayooWnGuY>

Getting ready for her first round match tomorrow - @KikiMladenovic hitting bombs ^MM

<http://t.co/OETYF3w1Zk>

Packed house for the practice of @NastiaPav. That Spanish dude next door might have drawn a few fans also ☐ ^DC <http://t.co/azld0sko7L>

All is good in the tennis world when Pica Power is back. High to the beautiful desert sky for

@MonicaAce93. ^DC <http://t.co/8kFxltxmd>

Belinda Bencic hard at work before her 1st main draw appearance #BNPPO14. Watching on is dad/coach, Ivan. ^DC <http://t.co/pHtnXuDzFK>

Indian Wells qualies & an all #adidas match on stadium 7. @ThiemDomi wins 1st set 7/6 vs Matt Reid. High quality. ^DC <http://t.co/jYrb2u094Z>

Who is the blonde hitting here at the #BNPPO14 ? ^MM <http://t.co/H0uRbxAFQi>

Big thanks to Stefanie Graf for her continued support and help with the #adidas players. It's priceless for us. ^DC <https://t.co/PeNKSeUTRc>

This morning #StefanieGraf came out again and spent some time with #BelindaBencic ^MM

<http://t.co/fN7KSHakaH>

#Adidas Naiktha Bains (@TeamBains) ^DC <http://t.co/II0JzRvKj8>

#Adidas @NastiaPav ^DC <http://t.co/lkpeDYd01Y>

#Adidas @sorana_cirstea ^DC <http://t.co/DpH9iZT6Pe>

#Adidas Naiktha Bains (@TeamBains) ^DC <http://t.co/M3LGyByM3u>

#Adidas Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova (@NastiaPav) <http://t.co/HeTcE259Fv>

#Adidas @sorana_cirstea ^DC <http://t.co/h08F4KyCUI>

Photo's from the #Adidas training camp in Las Vegas @RedRockTennis. @andreapetkovic &

Naiktha Bains (@TeamBains) ^DC <http://t.co/tDacXm6DqQ>

Autograph signing at Las Vegas Golf & Tennis in Las Vegas with @sorana_cirstea. ^DC

<http://t.co/QbZ05t430y>

Beautiful day for #tennis out here at @RedRockTennis - @NastiaPav and @belinda_bencic on

court ^MM <http://t.co/5cCJ6ddQQG>

@aaenaaa You're welcome! Enjoy.

RT @darren_cahill: The @AdidasTennis girls leave their mark on @RedRockTennis center court

after a long training day. <http://t.co/VMSdKytwFv>

RT @sorana_cirstea: Happy to be back in Vegas training with the Adidas team !!!! @darren_cahill

@MatsMerkel <http://t.co/vRRfFzFUye>

RT @NastiaPav: @darren_cahill looking comfy in his new russian ushanka yaaay!! @adidastennis

#frommoscowtovegas <http://t.co/FZXvxyuZX0>

RT @sorana_cirstea: .. at the ADIDAS Headquarters today...After 10 years together it's safe to call

them my family ;) <http://t.co/hVMw2RI2Dw>

Center Court ready @RedRockTennis for the Adidas camp w/ Cirstea, Pavlyuchenkova, Petkovic,

Bains, Bencic & Verdasco. <http://t.co/ltpOIKomJ>

Lighting up the court. Are you supporting @Tsonga7 in the #Open13 quarter-finals today?

<http://t.co/ORrZmO0GNp>

Beautiful weather for @adidastennis training with Naiktha Bains (@TeamBains) grinding away

@RedRockTennis. ^DC <http://t.co/615QhmWBxr>

We're loving the nails @mkirilenko! Maria took a break from #Sochi to hang out with fans at our

store: <http://t.co/ij4x9TFMt1>

Stan Smith, two time Grand Slam champ, talks about his lifelong passions... Tennis and skateboarding! <http://t.co/oFHwBr1R76>

We're rooting for you! RT @AngeliqueKerber a good week but unfortunately no title gave my best ... next: DUBAI!!!

.@Tsonga7 will be out to defend his #Open13 crown this week in Marseilles. Who wants to see him go all the way?

Prepping begins for the pre Indian Wells training camp for the @AdidasTennis team

@RedRockTennis. #allin ^DC <http://t.co/aJDLyYvy0m>

@ToNY_SocialC Which did you go for?

No worries. RT @FilippoBaldi: Love my new clay court Adizero III. Thank you @adidastennis!!!!

@AdidasItalia @adidas <http://t.co/43q8HgpyPu>

Enjoy! RT @Noahrubin33: ADIDAS! @adidastennis @adidas @adidasrunning love the new stuff! <http://t.co/RpAwyMzy9F>

Did you watch @Andy_Murray land team GB their first place in the #DavisCup quarters in 28 years? <http://t.co/328N5nt4Gq>

RT @adidas: Tennis star @dhantuchova serves up the new @PorscheDesign Sport collection.

Get in the game: <http://t.co/JyTx3sOzpp> <http://t.co/...>

RT @adidasAU: To be the man, you have to beat the man. @andy_murray what an epic battle! #AusOpen <http://t.co/R4n3q8zACK>

Way to go @andy_murray! Could this be the turning point? #AusOpen

Are you #AllinforMurray? Let him know he's got your support through the third set! @Andy_Murray #AusOpen

Not down, never out. When you're up against @Andy_Murray, it isn't over until the last points been played. #AusOpen

RT @adidasAU: Never give up, never give in. #keepfighting #AusOpen #fanslam

<http://t.co/z8QjbfVOI2>

RT @adidasAU: It took something special to stop Djokovic tonight... Paris is calling you Novak! #AusOpen #fanslam <http://t.co/Ba3a0UqOcX>

RT @adidasAU: We like what you're serving up, Novak. Keep it up! It tastes like victory. #AusOpen
#fanslam <http://t.co/6Tnkq6eAgN>

RT @adidasAU: It looks tight, but it will be a stretch to knock Novak out tonight. #AusOpen
#fanslam <http://t.co/R211ACn1H5>

We're off! Will history repeat itself? We hope so... @djokernole #AusOpen

RT @adidasAU: Ana's made her mark on the #AusOpen. Bring on Roland Garros! #fanslam
<http://t.co/2NQNUVgDWj>

@Ataraxis00 that was me. Dropped the phone and it hit send. Oops

Game, set, match to @andy_murray. On to the quarter-finals. #AusOpen <http://t.co/j1etud4flc>

No stopping @DjokerNole at this #AusOpen. <http://t.co/xX8ajwKfqs>

Crowd packed in for an Andy Murray practice session @AustralianOpen (via @MatsMerkel) ^DC
<http://t.co/glxYGxt8kQ>

Check out @andy_murray on his day off here at the #AustralianOpen ^MM <http://t.co/C6RXqIE5X9>

Adidas collection is making quite the splash down under. ^DC <http://t.co/WrP8XeOgbv>

Injury - what injury? @Andy_Murray is back. #AusOpen <http://t.co/qWzJKVzZ6p>

Check out the @adidasAU store in Melbourne. @CaroWozniacki represented well in here during
the #AustralianOpen ^MM <http://t.co/t0zQYwNt7A>

Another win for @DjokerNole! He's all over #AusOpen 2014 <http://t.co/oZHFZ9r7fz>

We're #AllAna for #AusOpen 2014. @Analvanovic <http://t.co/gPU6zjRuDR>

3rd round done. @AngeliqueKerber progresses to the 4th. #AusOpen <http://t.co/DTGq1LVmqm>

Blue courts, blue skies. Must be Melbourne. #AusOpen <http://t.co/JaiNSRK9q0>

Want to know how the pros coped with this week's heat at #AusOpen? Fabio Fognini shares his
secret... <http://t.co/BihpTJYt4B>

RT @tsonga7: Take over down under @adidastennis <http://t.co/8uHTZlvYu2>

Another 5 set victory for #GillesSimon last night! Recover well Gilles ^MM <http://t.co/uwqfJQk7a4>

Incredible. @Andy_Murray won 23 points back-to-back to turn that 3rd set around. #AusOpen
<http://t.co/bOzj57LzqC>

Another win! @Andy_Murray is bringing the heat to Melbourne. #AusOpen <http://t.co/xlMArcKjuW>

Who are you backing at #AusOpen 2014? <http://t.co/3iog7xjlx1>

Thanks! RT @BogdanGrygo: If there was a competition among designers @AustralianOpen, @adidastennis would win in. Gorgeous dresses ...

Serving up style, taking home wins. @CaroWozniacki is through to the 3rd round. #AusOpen
<http://t.co/vKre2koayH>

No worries, enjoy! RT @JoTatlot: Thx you @adidastennis !! #AustralianOpen14
<http://t.co/Vleg7sURv2>

When it's 42 degrees celsius, there are no easy wins. #AusOpen <http://t.co/WAMEbil4hG>

RT @dhantuchova: Found out that my match 2day was longest women's match of the @AustralianOpen so far! #tired but #proud 2 survive it :-))

Looks pretty amped to us. RT @adidasAU: Is big jerzy amped for the 2nd round? #ausopen #fanslam <http://t.co/eMk8hv4g6u>

Our #AusOpen ones to watch today: @DjokerNole, @MonicaAce93, @AngeliqueKerber, @Analvanovic. Who are you going to be watching?

#AusOpen day 3, let's do this. <http://t.co/iSrdq4KCVc>

An off-court classic, the @adidasOriginals #StanSmith returns tomorrow. @Andy_Murray on what the shoe means to him: <http://t.co/81NE7cXwv9>

Wins for @CaroWozniacki, @Tsonga7, @Andy_Murray & @FerVerdasco at #AusOpen day 2. @adidasTennis can take the heat. <http://t.co/eh6GXmd0KA>

Thanks! RT @tammyvent: Really like @CaroWozniacki's dress and like @Analvanovic's too. So far- @adidastennis doing good! ... #AusOpen

@123tennisbal Glad you like it!

@123tennisbal Yes it is!

We're getting a lot of love for our @StellaMcCartney @adidasWomen #AusOpen kits. Glad you like them! <http://t.co/6maPTwAzir>

RT @AustralianOpen: Great to have @KikiMladenovic stop by the @WTA booth to meet fans today! :) #ausopen <http://t.co/XvKR03mlAY>

Big smiles from @monicaace93 training for the #AusOpen over the weekend! #PicaPower
<http://t.co/V3wkOrCBsQ>

Good luck to all our athletes for the #AustralianOpen ^MM <http://t.co/KzWxsckjJr>

Also part of the new adidas gear our players received here before the #AustralianOpen including the #boost runners ^MM <http://t.co/4Ybqh47TSy>

We're ready. Are you? #AusOpen <http://t.co/MmORO9abSC>

Two adiGirls and doubles partners at the #AustraliaOpen practicing together - @KikiMladenovic & @flavia_pennetta <http://t.co/8rITiBWM0e>

For all females out there - @sorana_cirstea is wearing one of the new practice tank tops! Retweet if you like it too <http://t.co/REBIngS85l>

All our players including @tsonga7 love the new #AustralianOpen "KISS MY adidas" practice shirts - do you too? ^MM <http://t.co/xXRSj4fqCN>

Great style - @tsonga7 practicing on one of the #AustraliaOpen outside courts ^MM <http://t.co/K9exZjed7D>

Practicing together on Margaret Court Arena at the #AustraliaOpen - @andy_murray and @picomonaco ^MM <http://t.co/ltnLHfYuEg>

RT @AustralianOpen: Looks like @laurarobson5 met her match today... #Joey #ausopen <http://t.co/9Wno5dEDYu>

Playing the qualifications on court 3 at the #AustraliaOpen - @TeamBains ^MM <http://t.co/lX75fh1K69>

Check out the new practice shirts our players will be wearing during the #australianopen ^MM <http://t.co/Tg0qkJKdq0>

RT @tennis: .@AustralianOpen 2014 ... check out: @andy_murray @Analvanovic @tsonga7 @CaroWozniacki @mkirilenko <http://t.co/drwTJAPk90>

@_SoSouleta Glad you like it.

It's begun. @Andy_Murray is in Melbourne and practicing for #AusOpen. <http://t.co/mqix6thhOJ>
@LiviaNole Glad you like them!

If you missed it, check out @TheSliceTweets to see what some of our players will be wearing at #AusOpen: <http://t.co/VcJLORNYhr>

No letting up. @Andy_Murray is back to the grind training for next year. Will you be cheering him on in 2014? <http://t.co/ttnanZz1sW>

RT "@ashbar96: Pretty pumped to win last night! Crowd was crazy!!!! Get to have a rip at

Sharapova next :):) <http://t.co/J8F54TrCm6>

Look who dropped in on @Andy_Murray while he was training for next year - none other than @KevinSpacey. <http://t.co/VX32BSztY5>

While we enjoy a rest @Andy_Murray is back on court training for 2014. Who wants to see him go all the way next year? <http://t.co/EXITQFggVr>

Last one. Obviously I'm not working Sori hard enough. @sorana_cirstea all smiles. ^DC #eskimotennis <http://t.co/JB9D0V5F1T>

Don't mess w/ the ladies of @RedRockTennis! Especially the one they call Des the 4.0 Destroyer, @sorana_cirstea ^DC <http://t.co/TEf4Ac4CfX>

Training hard at @RedRockTennis all week with @sorana_cirstea, Evan Song and Sarge Sargsian. ^DC <http://t.co/fWhOjjBtqu>

Finally, who else but @DjokerNole. Another great year for Nole. What was your top Novak moment of 2013? #MomentSeized <http://t.co/9IA301r8Jl>

This year Mikhail Youzhny became the first Russian to win the Swiss Open in nearly 20 years. #MomentSeized <http://t.co/Mrsx5BAxxf>

It's been a great year for @Sorana_Cirstea. What was your top Sorana moment of 2013? #MomentSeized <http://t.co/LTGPFuHtyA>

.@AngeliqueKerber had a great win in Linz this year. What was your top Kerber moment of 2013? #MomentSeized <http://t.co/AkNTcHoC5E>

Nice. @JimY123 @FTiafoe - here it was. #MomentSeized <http://t.co/fXlzwTG1u8>

For sure. RT @JimY123: Yes, of course @Wimbledon but also his successful surgery and return to the courts so we can see him play in 2014

RT @Swaf13: @adidasTennis Wimbledon, not just the win itself but his whole tournament, his match vs Verdasco was like a telegraph of intent

First up it has to be @Andy_Murray. A year we'll never forget. What was your top Murray moment of 2013? #MomentSeized <http://t.co/8ovGAEf94r>

This week we're going to be looking back at some of our athletes' finest moments in 2013, get involved and share yours. #MomentSeized

RT @adidasUK: Congratulations @andy_murray! #allinformurray <http://t.co/3WT0F9pYhD>

@julvanbelle We usually only make those t-shirts for @Analvanovic, but in the spirit of the season we'll help you out. DM us for more info.

Congratulations to @LiviaNole, the winner of our #NovakNole Barricade giveaway! Thanks to everyone who got involved.

@abot_3 Hi there, we're going to be announcing the winner early next week. Be sure to check back and best of luck!

Nice. RT @djole_djokovic: @adidastennis how cool is this? :) <http://t.co/8twS674HAn>

It's your last chance to win a pair of exclusive @DjokerNole barricades. Find out how to get involved: <http://t.co/pA0OojAH2U> #NovakNole

.@Analvanovic good news Ana! Glad that you like the new ClimaWarm+ Ride Shoes!
#warmdontquit

RT @Analvanovic: Working hard... We are all in!!! #allAna #Ajde <http://t.co/R792sil2aF>

Thanks for all the entries to the #NovakNole competition so far - if you haven't entered yet you still have time!

Hey @JugarTenis yes you can participate from any country - check out the T&Cs for more information: <http://t.co/4Yp1VlkQVf>

Here are the T&Cs for the #NovakNole Barricade giveaway: <http://t.co/rzSzfNGEyL> Get involved here: <http://t.co/5joz6n6eFp>

What band does @DjokerNole have on his t-shirt? Watch the vid & tell us to win Novak Barricades! <http://t.co/Zd6xP005PV> #NovakNole

Look who came to visit, a true legend of the sport. Always a pleasure to hang out with Steffi.
<http://t.co/jEFsHrA8Uz>

@B2H3M Glad you like them. Hope you had a good match. #Barricade

Last night @DjokerNole finished the year on a high, by winning the #ATPFinals. Who was cheering him on? <http://t.co/T18HyCJwtW>

The rankings may have changed, the champion has not. @DjokerNole is #ATP Finals winner for the second year in a row.

And there it is! Twenty wins in a row for @DjokerNole and he's into the semi finals.

<http://t.co/BKaHObEBYB>

A convincing finish to the match from @DjokerNole at the #ATP Finals. The unbeaten run continues...

Following his 40th title win in Paris, @DjokerNole's #ATP Finals defence is on. Who wants to see him go all the way? <http://t.co/bvznDBktx7>

Happy birthday to the one and only @Analvanovic - hope you're having a great day!

No worries for Novak. A great win for @DjokerNole at the #ATP this evening. Were you watching?

Great match on shortly at the #ATP. Let's hear from the #NoleFam backing @DjokerNole!

.@All_DayKLe glad you think so! Have you been able to get them on court yet?

A great match on right now for @FerVerdasco at the #BNPPM - who's tuned in?

@ChristinaMcHale That is awesome.

Nice! RT @Igtennisuk: Another new addition ! @adidastennis @adidasUK ready for the winter !

#tennis #addidastennis <http://t.co/sVgY3P3VTa>

@markedtennis Glad you like them.

RT @mkirilenko: Ready for the practice ☐ <http://t.co/8wcwdBS9qFF>

The #WTACHamps is underway and @AngeliqueKerber is on court right now. Let's hear some support!

Congratulations to @CaroWozniacki on winning her 21st career title yesterday!

Glad you had a good time! RT @laurarobson5: Great day at the Adidas headquarters in Germany.

So cool going through the archives...

.@DjokerNole wins the Shanghai Masters to take his fifth #ATP tour title of the year - see how he does it: <http://t.co/Zd6xP005PV>

@Danny_Munoz5 That is an impressive haul. Enjoy it.

The title defence begins. @DjokerNole breezes through the 1st round. Find out how he does it:

<http://t.co/Zd6xP005PV> #NovakNole

.@DjokerNole wins the #ChinaOpen for the fourth time! Find out how he does it:

<http://t.co/Zd6xP005PV> #NovakNole #NoleFam

Another round, another win for @DjokerNole at the #ChinaOpen. Find out how he does it:

<http://t.co/Zd6xP005PV> #NovakNole

No worries @katydunne, enjoy the kit!

RT @katydunne: Best feeling ever when you get bak from a hard days training with boxes of kit waiting for u! #thanks! <http://t.co/3Vk8zLjLi>

Round two down, @DjokerNole moves on at the #ChinaOpen. Discover the two sides of #NovakNole: <http://t.co/Zd6xP005PV>

A big happy birthday to the one and only @darren_cahill - hope you're having a good one. It takes mental strength to be World Number 1. See how @DjokerNole does it here: <http://t.co/Zd6xP005PV> #NovakNole #NoleFam

RT @MicaelaFonsecaA: Lets take a moment to realize most of my tennis clothes are from @adidastennis ... #adidasrules <http://t.co/H2kiouuTPg>

Novak and Nole. The two sides of a personality. The world's number one tennis player. #NovakNole #NoleFam <https://t.co/SXTbVgVLVI>

Novak is intense. Novak is driven. Novak never gives up on a point. #NovakNole #NoleFam <https://t.co/FW5DSsYIcH>

Great action at the #ChinaOpen, @Analvanovic and @AndreaPetkovic winning their first round matches. Congratulations to both!

Nole is a funny guy who likes to spend time with his family... #NovakNole <https://t.co/71d18AO6x6>
Impressive, @AngeliqueKerber hasn't dropped a set so far in the #TorayPPO. Who's going to be cheering her on in the final today?

Nice - hope you enjoy them RT @jacquelineDilan: Thank you @adidastennis you guys never disappoint <http://t.co/cgEDRruDQh>

Congratulations to @AngeliqueKerber on reaching the finals of the #TorayPPO. Best of luck in the final tomorrow!

Get well soon, Andy. RT @andy_murray: Thanks for all the well wishes, means a lot to me... <http://t.co/Larz48wa3f>

Double trouble! RT @monicaace93: We had a feeling this was gona happen soon!!!
@adidastennis ... <http://t.co/nUx5fRMTMX>

#PicaPower! RT @monicaace93: Im #allin @adidastennis @darren_cahill .. Lets get ready for Beijing! #BounceBack <http://t.co/eK2OHhGVf3>

Looking good. RT @savvystringer: @adidastennis Shanghai masters barricade 8 so sick.

<http://t.co/VM4wdRA3f6>

Sprint faster, jump higher and get explosive. Introducing the X_CELL, SPEED_CELL and multi-sport app: <http://t.co/aaJU5Lc7I7> #GetGame

Appendix 2

20 TWEETS FROM @NIKETENNIS FOR SECOND CODER

Get To Know: @GrigorDimitrov <http://t.co/ZJHuzhyf6S>

@btthechamp They can't return what they can't touch. Congrats on the match wins and those power serves, Brandon. Who's up next?

The lighter side. Take a sneak peek at Grigor Dimitrov's day with Nike Tech Pack. Full story coming soon. <http://t.co/4IIDgQQmn1>

@OliverPeyron We hear you. We want you to break serves, not laces. Get in touch with the retailer and, if that doesn't work, let us know.

@mikekitson07 No shame in your shoe game. Looks like you've got some space open for the ZV9.5T and the Lunar Ballistecs.

@proleartthreat1 Hi Paddy, the answers are here: <https://t.co/06Ql63kj85>

@n2faith1 I can't remember but you've got 13 more years to get to 6'0 like me!

@WhitneyWofford Yo, they feel sweeter. They're lighter and really stable.

@charlotte_rsd Barbados and Hawaii.

@NowMarc Friends because I learned English from it. But I love a lot of TV shows right now. You should watch Real Husbands of Hollywood.

@AlessandroLaza I'm at Nike right now and that's what we're working on!

Ask A Champion. On Feb 18th at 3:15pm PST, @Vika7 will answer your questions. Submit questions now and tag #AskVika. <http://t.co/NHUXZpIJQv>

@alecmbelt Welcome back to the battle. How'd it go out there?

Make something of your Monday. <http://t.co/INy6lslh0P>

@rogerfederer Nothing neutral about these.

@Alexanelli And we love you back.

Know what you came for. #LiNa #AusOpen <http://t.co/UIDj6QQxAP>

When the stage gets bigger, your drive gets stronger. @GrigorDimitrov #AusOpen <http://t.co/gxuy0hdbPu>

Work. @RogerFederer #AusOpen <http://t.co/Elcnn6WN25>

Heat tested. Battle ready. @SerenaWilliams #AusOpen <http://t.co/i76kJrnCu2>

20 TWEETS FROM @ADIDASTENNIS FOR SECOND CODER

Drop your temperature, not your game. #SonyOpenTennis #Climachill <http://t.co/NBnDfQAKVn>

With that win, @flavia_pennetta is through to the #IndianWells final. Bring it on! #BNPPO14 #bnpparibasopen <http://t.co/3Sh2Ocg9Cw>

.@KikiMladenovic holding the first tennis shoe @adidas ever made. Be careful, don't drop it... <http://t.co/5vqsainUvT>

Early morning practice for @sorana_cirstea. ^DC <http://t.co/6SdMgNnWsd>

Packed house for the practice of @NastiaPav. That Spanish dude next door might have drawn a few fans also ☐ ^DC <http://t.co/azld0sko7L>

#Adidas @sorana_cirstea ^DC <http://t.co/DpH9iZT6Pe>

RT @sorana_cirstea: .. at the ADIDAS Headquarters today...After 10 years together it's safe to call them my family ;) <http://t.co/hVMw2RI2Dw>

RT @adidasAU: It looks tight, but it will be a stretch to knock Novak out tonight. #AusOpen #fanslam <http://t.co/R211ACn1H5>

Adidas collection is making quite the splash down under. ^DC <http://t.co/WrP8XeOGbv>

Another win for @DjokerNole! He's all over #AusOpen 2014 <http://t.co/oZHFZ9r7fz>

When it's 42 degrees celsius, there are no easy wins. #AusOpen <http://t.co/WAMEbil4hG>

Wins for @CaroWozniacki, @Tsonga7, @Andy_Murray & @FerVerdasco at #AusOpen day 2. @adidasTennis can take the heat. <http://t.co/eh6GXmd0KA>

Check out the new practice shirts our players will be wearing during the #australianopen ^MM <http://t.co/Tg0gkJKdq0>

Look who dropped in on @Andy_Murray while he was training for next year - none other than @KevinSpacey. <http://t.co/VX32BSztY5>

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