

# Image Content Analysis of Egyptian Athletes Visual Self-Presentation Strategies on Instagram

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**Abstract:** The study of visual presentation strategies on social media has increasingly captured the attention of academics, particularly those specializing in sports communication and self-image branding among professional athletes. This investigation aims to analyze the visual self-presentation strategies employed by Egyptian male and female athletes on Instagram to effectively convey their images to fans and sports stakeholders. Utilizing image content analysis as a methodology, this research examines the online tactics used by athletes, focusing on the visual elements of their posts and comparing the online presence of 10 Egyptian male and female professional athletes by analyzing 1,000 images. The collection of images began with the athlete's most recent post and proceeded backward to gather 100 images for each athlete. The findings reveal that Egyptian athletes strategically utilize images to position themselves, with the effectiveness of their self-presentation largely contingent upon the nature of the content they share. Despite observable disparities in online engagement between male and female athletes—stemming from cultural influences and the predominant role of men in the Egyptian sports landscape—there is a recognition among athletes of the critical importance of visual self-presentation. However, many athletes struggle to implement effective online strategies due to limited resources and knowledge. The practical implications of this study emphasize the necessity for athletes to develop tailored online strategies that align with their specific objectives and the image they wish to project. Such strategies should consider the athlete's current performance status and career stage, striking a balance between on-field and off-field imagery while prioritizing content that resonates with their audience. Additionally, fostering workshops or training sessions on effective social media use could empower athletes to leverage their visual branding more effectively, ultimately enhancing their engagement with fans and stakeholders within the sports community. This study contributes to a deeper understanding of how cultural contexts shape self-presentation strategies in the digital age.

**Keywords:** Self-Presentation, Athletes Brand Image, Gender Difference, Instagram

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## 1. Introduction

Brands are typically characterized by specific attributes associated with products or services (Keller, 1993), while personal branding refers to the unique characteristics linked to an individual. In the realm of sports, this personal branding is often termed an “athlete brand” (Parmentier & Fischer, 2012). An athlete's brand possesses distinct and irreplaceable traits (Chadwick & Burton, 2008), and according to Arai et al. (2014), it is defined as “the public persona of an individual athlete who has established symbolic meaning and value through their name, image, or other brand elements in the market.”

Arai et al. identify the primary brand associations of an athlete as dimensions including athletic performance, appealing appearance, and a marketable lifestyle. This concept is also described as “the practice of strategically shaping and managing how one is perceived by others in social contexts” (Rampersad, 2008; Resnick et al., 2016). An athlete's image is a crucial element alongside their athletic performance in any sports context. This image plays various roles in athlete branding, and establishing a strong image requires significant marketing efforts and best practices, particularly in the digital age (Geurin-Eagleman & Burch, 2015). Maintaining an athlete's image on social media has become essential for expanding their fan base and attracting sponsors. This is reflected in the public messages they share, which may relate to their sport or personal lives. Before managing their online presence haphazardly, it is vital for individuals to understand the nuances of an athlete's self-presentation and the most effective strategies for successful online engagement. Accordingly, this study aims to examine the visual self-presentation strategies used by Egyptian male and female athletes on Instagram to effectively showcase their image to their fans and sports stakeholders. The reason behind choosing Instagram as the platform for this study because Instagram is the most visually orientated platform compared to others, owing to its features and user-friendliness (Meta, 2023). By January 2024, Instagram was acknowledged as the foremost preferred social media platform, with WhatsApp and Facebook ranking second and third, respectively (Kemp, 2024). The number of internet users in Egypt was recorded at 82.01 million in January 2024, accounting for 72.2% of the country's total population. The number of social media users in Egypt is 45.40 million, accounting for 40.0% of the country's total population. Instagram ranks third foremost preferred social media platform among Egyptians, behind Facebook and WhatsApp (Kemp, 2024). Instagram's distinctive visual emphasis, centred on image sharing and hashtags, differentiates it from other social media platforms and

influences user interactions (Burgess, 2006; Caliandro & Graham, 2020). Platforms such as Facebook and Twitter facilitate image sharing and sharing; yet, these functionalities are secondary rather than central. In contrast, Instagram is fundamentally a visual platform, entirely reliant on imagery. This emphasis on visual content makes Instagram a crucial tool for athletes in shaping their online self-presentation.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Online Self Presentation Strategies by Athletes**

Social media enables athletes to directly communicate and interact with their fans and other persons in the sports industry, alongside traditional media outlets (Li et al., 2017). Furthermore, social media empowers athletes to challenge the portrayal of themselves in traditional media by using their online platforms to choose and share content of their choosing (Sanderson, 2011). When analysing social media postings through the lens of the self-presentation theory, they are categorised into two primary types: frontstage and backstage posts. Frontstage posts consist of content on pitch, during competitions and posts of interacting with fans and material that promotes athletes and their brands. Backstage postings consist of reposts from various internet platforms, demonstrating empathy for other athletes and teams (Lebel and Danylchuk, 2012). Furthermore, Frederick and Clavio (2015) discovered that athletes mostly use personal material, such as details about their family or their daily routine, in their backstage postings. Goffman (1978) argues that individuals shape their identities in accordance with societal expectations. Similarly, athletes conform to the expectations of the sports industry and other stakeholders when presenting themselves online. Their online presence has a significant impact on the followers who seek insights into their professional and personal lives through platforms like Instagram. Consequently, strategic planning for their online image becomes crucial (Gonkek & Gencer, 2023). Prior studies on impression management and self-presentation on social media have proposed two strategies (Kim & Lee, 2011; Niu et al., 2015; Gao et al., 2023). The first strategy is positive self-presentation, which entails reducing negative impressions from online followers by carefully choosing and projecting an ideal online persona. This may be accomplished by disseminating postings that exhibit happy moments and only positive content (Kim & Lee, 2011). The second strategy is honest self-presentation, in which individuals post non-selectively without censoring their content. This includes expressing positive and negative events and feelings (Yang & Brown, 2016; Yang et al., 2017; Gao et al., 2023).

Online self-presentation strategies enable athletes to create the content they want to share freely; however, some factors must be considered because it's not personal. Each athlete's goals, fans, and sports career are key factors that influence their overall online strategy for self-presentation. Schlenker & Pontari (2000) and Ning et al. (2024) have discussed these factors in detail. Athletes also need to strike a balance between their online objectives and the fans' expectations, which are unavoidably shaped by social and cultural norms in addition to the athletes' backgrounds (Xu & Armstrong, 2019; Johnson et al., 2023).

In a study conducted by Ning, Miao, and Wang (2024) revealed that Chinese Olympic athletes recognised the importance and potential of strategically using social media platforms to improve their brand image and they adopted self-presentation strategies online. The research conducted by Ning, Miao, and Wang (2024) explores the financial challenges experienced by retired Chinese athletes, including Shangwu Zhang and Dongmei Ai.

The study highlights the many debates surrounding this topic. In addition, Ning et al. (2024) found that Chinese athletes who do not do well in their sports or attain athletic success tend to limit their online self-presentation owing to a lack of excitement. In several Western countries, lesser-known athletes use social media as a crucial means to shape their public image (Toffoletti & Thorpe, 2018). In a related study, Sanderson (2013) examined the utilisation of Twitter by rookie athletes in major sports leagues such as MLB, NBA, NFL, and NHL. The study focused on how these athletes strategically portray a distinct persona on social media that goes beyond their on-field performance. This involves tweeting about various subjects such as cultural preferences and personal stories.

Logan Morrison, a Major League Baseball (MLB) player, used self-presentation strategies on Twitter, as outlined also by Sanderson (2014). Morrison portrayed a self-image characterised by offensiveness and sarcasm, which contributed to his significant online popularity, with a following exceeding 120,000 individuals. This incited resentment within his squad at the time and resulted in clashes between coaches, executives, and players. These tensions need the athlete to contemplate their self-presentation and exert more control and management over the projected image (Ning et al., 2024).

Self-presentation theory (Goffman, 1959) helps athletes manage their self-image and how they are perceived by others, particularly in social contexts. Athletes strategically curate their online personas, sharing content that highlights their achievements and personal lives while also engaging with fans in a relatable manner. This careful construction of identity allows athletes to foster a deeper connection with their audience, enhancing their brand and marketability. Moreover, by presenting themselves in a favorable light, athletes can navigate public scrutiny and shape fan perceptions, ultimately influencing their legacy both on and off the field. The previous research underscores the complexity of self-presentation strategies in the digital age, where athletes must navigate both professional and personal expectations. While social media provides a platform for athletes to control their narratives and engage directly with their audience, it also introduces challenges regarding authenticity, branding, and fan reception. Studies indicate that athletes strategically curate content to maintain an appealing and marketable image, balancing the tension between positive and honest self-presentation. However, cultural factors, sporting success, and individual personality play significant roles in shaping their online personas. Ultimately, an athlete's ability to manage their self-image effectively can influence their public perception, career trajectory, and commercial opportunities. However, the ways in which male and female athletes present themselves—and are represented—in online spaces are notably different.

## 2.2 Differences between Male & Female Athletes' Online Self Presentation

Worldwide sports media reinforced the concept of hegemonic masculinity by continually categorising female athletes as inferior to their male counterparts (Bruce, 2016). According to Geurin-Eagleman & Burch (2015), female athletes participate in sports globally at a rate of about 40%, but only about 8% of media coverage focuses on their participation. Ahmad (2019) reports that women's sports and athletes accounted for a mere 4% of media content in 2019, with women contributing only 12% to sports media. Previous research confirms the inadequate representation of female athletes, likely due to insufficient media attention, prevailing patriarchal systems, and male dominance in certain cultural settings. Ponterotto (2014) conducted a corpus-assisted study to investigate the media portrayal of tennis player Maria Sharapova in Italian and English newspapers. The investigation uncovered two obvious media depiction strategies: sexualising Maria Sharapova's body by highlighting her sexual appeal and desirability and presenting her as an innocent little girl rather than an exceptional athlete. Media coverage of female athletes tends to use language that evokes emotions, whereas coverage of male athletes focuses more on their athleticism rather than their physical or personal qualities.

According to Gonkek and Gencer's (2023) research, there has been a recent decline in male dominance in sports, coinciding with an increase in media coverage of female participation in traditionally male-dominated sports. The problem lies in the fact that female sports do not generate the same amount of media attention or interest from fans as those of males (Valenti et al., 2018; Doyle et al., 2021). The level of emphasis placed on female sports differs throughout various nations as a result of the culture and norms prevalent in their communities (Sadeghi et al., 2018). Recently, the study conducted by Gonkek and Gencer (2023) corroborated the research of Geurin-Eagleman and Burch (2015), indicating that female athletes tend to share more about their personal lives on Instagram compared to their male counterparts. One possible explanation, as clarified by Sun (2008), is that women get pleasure from undertaking many roles in their everyday lives, such as being a mother and pursuing a professional job, and they take pride in demonstrating their ability to successfully manage these diverse responsibilities. Gonkek and Gencer (2023) found that male athletes are more inclined to share content that highlights their athletic appearance. In addition, Kane et al. (2013) discovered that female athletes want more emphasis on their athletic accomplishments rather than their femininity from both their fans and the sports media. Overall, the research highlights the persistent gender disparities in media representation and self-presentation strategies among athletes. Female athletes continue to face systemic barriers that limit their visibility in mainstream sports media, often compelling them to emphasize personal aspects of their lives on social media rather than solely focusing on their athletic achievements. While there has been some progress in increasing coverage of female sports, societal norms and cultural perceptions still influence the way female athletes are portrayed and perceived. The evidence suggests that despite efforts to challenge traditional gender narratives, sports media continues to reinforce distinctions between male and female athletes, affecting their self-presentation and public engagement.

## 3. Methodology

Qualitative research is a prevalent study approach in the field of social sciences (Saldaña, 2011). Data can comprise several types of information, such as textual materials, e.g., interviews, papers, and fieldnotes or visual materials, including images, videos, and Internet content (Saldaña, 2011). According to Riffe, Lacy, and Fico

(2005), content analysis is a systematic and replicable method for analysing content, both written and visual. Visual content analysis is considered a subtle method as it involves consuming and studying photographs after they have been taken and posted online (Riffe, Lacy, and Fico, 2005). The study analyses photographs posted on Instagram by ten professional Egyptian athletes, divided equally between males and females.

This study used a purposive convenience sampling method to choose a sample of ten athletes (five males and five females) from various sports who possess the largest Instagram following and the most popular sports in Egypt both team and individual sports. It involved collecting and categorising one hundred photos from each participant, resulting in a cumulative total of 1,000 images among the 10 athletes. The athletes in this research represent a total of seven sports, consisting of three team sports and four individual sports. The sports illustrated in **Table 1** features both male and female athletes.

**Table 1: Sport represented in the Image Content Analysis**

Male Athletes No.	Sport	Female Athletes No.	Sport
1	Football	1	Squash
2	Football	2	Basketball
3	Handball	3	Swimming
4	Handball	4	Table Tennis
5	Squash	5	Karate

The sample and athlete selection were limited by the absence of statistics in Egypt indicating the highest number of followers among Egyptian athletes and the most popular sport. Therefore, the sample relied heavily on the insights of experts from the sports industry.

### 3.1 Coding Procedures

The protocol for the coding procedure was developed based on the adaptation of the coding schemes for image content of Goffman's (1976) content analytic investigations of visual media (Clavio & Geurin-Eagleman, 2011), athletes' online visual self-presentations (Lebel & Danylchuk, 2012; Pegoraro, 2010), and Geurin-Eagleman and Burch (2016). For this presented project the coding protocol, as shown in **Table 2**, involves six phases. The first of which is categorising the main content of the photo, represented in the posted photograph, examining the elements of composition within the shot, and ultimately communicating the emotions that the posted photographs want to express about this athlete. Furthermore, the code contained essential details such as a photo caption, the compatibility of the caption with the photographs, user tags, and a hashtag. Significantly, a dimension was only included in the primary content coding for females since it was highly noticeable and absent in the photographs of male athletes. This dimension relates to material associated with supporting causes and engaging in charitable activities.

**Table 2: below includes the details of the coding scheme**

Main Content of the photo (6 items)	Classification
Relating to athlete personal life	Any photo that refers to their personal life: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• daily routines</li> <li>• weather</li> <li>• party reference</li> <li>• charity work</li> <li>• family life</li> </ul>
Relating to athlete business life	Any photo that relates to their business life: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• training</li> <li>• traveling</li> <li>• game preparations</li> <li>• promoting products</li> </ul>
Relating to athlete sport	Any photo directly relates to their sport but not directly related to them: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• other games in their league</li> <li>• college or minor-league games of the same sport</li> <li>• equipment</li> </ul>

Main Content of the photo (6 items)	Classification
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• large events that take place in this sport and do not include the athlete</li> </ul>
Other sport or athlete	Any photograph that refers to another sport or athlete. Aside from athletes, any references to coaches, general managers, owners, or broadcasters from other sports are applicable to this category.
Reposting photo/content originally posted by fans	Any posts to comments their fans or non-fans have sent them, plus responses to spouses or family members and sports journalists.
Pop culture/ Landmark focused photo/ Internet Meme	Any photos on pop culture: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• TV show</li> <li>• movie</li> <li>• musician or group</li> <li>• actor or actress</li> <li>• politician</li> <li>• famous landmark</li> </ul>
Photograph Components (8 items)	Classification
Sizes of athletes in photos	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• single photo the picture in which the athlete is depicted in the usual or regular size.</li> <li>• bigger than others The more exaggerated picture depicts the athlete attracting particular attention because of their unusual and striking appearance or behaviour.</li> <li>• as big as others the picture in which the athlete appears as big as other individuals captured.</li> <li>• Smaller than others the picture in which the athlete appears further from perspective.</li> </ul>
Clothing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uniform</li> <li>• No uniform</li> </ul>
Posture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Normal the picture depicts the athlete in a normal stance, not arched or sitting.</li> <li>• cause knee/body arched the picture depicts the athlete in a stance whose body is arched or whose knee is posed.</li> </ul>
Emotions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• positive</li> <li>• neutral</li> <li>• negative</li> <li>• no face in view</li> </ul>
Photo types	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Selfie A picture of an athlete in which the athlete and photographer are the same. Signs of a selfie consist of arms extended to hold on the device in front of the athlete's face, a close-up picture of the face, or a mirror's reflection of the athlete carrying a camera.</li> <li>• Headshot A photograph that features the athlete's head.</li> <li>• Half body A photograph features the athlete's body parts, such as the torso and thighs.</li> <li>• Full body A photograph that features the athlete's entire body.</li> </ul>
The focus of photos	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Athlete in focus The image that focuses on the athlete mainly.</li> <li>• Athlete not in focus The photo focuses on a person rather than the athlete, such as a family member or a friend.</li> </ul>
Text in Photo	Availability of any texts, graphics design in the photographs.

The data collection occurred in April 2023, when photographs were gathered from the most recent photo shared by the athlete and proceeding backward to compile 100 images per athlete, thus without a defined or purposeful

time frame. Quantitative analysis was employed to code photographs, examining the frequency of each given picture as part of the process.

#### 4. Findings & Conclusion

The starting point of the analysis comprises data about the general use of hashtags, user tagging, and captions on athletes' Instagram accounts. It is observed that both male and female athletes engage in these practices, although females exhibit a significantly higher frequency, with their female athletes there are individual athletes who make substantially more use of tagging within their posts, particularly the use of hashtags. In addition, the analysis of the main photograph content reveals that the predominant content shared by male and female athletes consists of two categories: images depicting the sport they engage in on the field, and images showcasing their triumphs. Finally, emotions are the last coding aspect of photographs. Both male and female athletes had predominantly positive expressions in the photos, which represented their strongest feelings. However, female athletes had a 20% greater proportion of images with positive expressions compared to male athletes.

The first observation is that the male athletes within the sample show consistency in their online usage as there is no long-time gap between one post and another, unlike the selected female athletes, who lack online consistency. In addition, unlike female athletes, male athletes make limited use of hashtags connected to their posts. In conversation with 'Adel Koriam' – AFC Media Manager, a second general observation is that for male athletes in Egypt, team sports create fan engagement more than individual sports, especially when it comes to the Egyptian national team. On the other hand, female athletes who play in an individual sport attract more fans, and the reason behind this is that team sports in Egypt, such as football, handball, basketball, and volleyball for males, have greater support from media and federations than female team sports. It is also very clear that playing for a well-known team creates large differences in the number of followers and fan engagement between athletes. Differences also exist when comparing athletes who play football to another sport, especially in Egypt, where the most popular sport is football. These observations when combined are one of the reasons which limit the amount of fan engagement and total number of followers that female athletes in Egypt obtain. The findings of the main photograph content show that the male athletes commonly post content within their sport-setting context, which may include training, matches, tournaments, and camps. These athletes also post nationalism photographs, which may include holding their national flag, wearing the national team uniform, and winning championships with the national team, ranking as the second-highest content. Also coming in third in most posted content are photographs that include victories and celebrations that drive large traffic and increase engagement. The type of content that follows the top three items is personal content. Four athletes shared photographs featuring their families, consisting of their parents and children, only one differed from this with personal content which revolved around personal trips or friends, primarily due to their young age. Reposted photographs from other accounts, landmark scenes, and business content that may include media and sponsor deals are the least posted content.

As for the female athletes, the majority sampled frequently post content within the context of their sport, encompassing activities such as training, competitions, tournaments, and camps. The sampled female athletes also post personal photographs, which may feature their family, friends, and special occasions, making it the second most prevalent type of posted content. Photographs depicting wins and celebrations rank third in terms of the amount of content shared, with four of the five female athletes frequently posting such materials, with this helping to generate traffic, and fostering higher levels of engagement with their followers.

Female athletes tend to refrain from posting certain photographs, namely those that showcase their physical appearance and figure. The least often shared content consists of reposted photos sourced from other accounts, iconic locations, photographs featuring other athletes or sports, content about nationalism, and advocacy for charity causes. It is crucial to highlight that the inclusion of 'cause support' content in the female analysis is based on the discovery of its presence on female athletes' accounts, in contrast to male athletes where it was not present. Table 4.1 and 4.2 present some of the key findings of both male and female athletes.

**Table 3: Main Categories of Photographs – Male Athletes**

Criteria	MA1	MA2	MA3	MA4	MA5	Total	Percentage %
<b>Main Categories of Photographs</b>							
Personal	15	13	11	12	19	<b>70</b>	<b>14%</b>
Business	9	2	6	5	18	<b>40</b>	<b>8%</b>
Athlete Sport	30	56	36	37	40	<b>199</b>	<b>39.8%</b>
Physical Appearance	2	5	9	1	1	<b>18</b>	<b>3.6%</b>
Other athletes/Sport	15	9	14	11	4	<b>53</b>	<b>10.6%</b>
Reposting Content	0	0	0	1	0	<b>1</b>	<b>0.2%</b>
Landmarks	3	2	7	3	5	<b>20</b>	<b>4%</b>
Athlete Victory	32	10	13	24	18	<b>97</b>	<b>19.4%</b>
Nationalism	7	2	13	3	21	<b>46</b>	<b>9.2%</b>

**Table 4: Main Categories of Photographs – Female Athletes**

Criteria	FA1	FA2	FA3	FA4	FA5	Total	Percentage %
<b>Main Categories of Photographs</b>							
Personal	10	9	32	26	47	<b>124</b>	<b>24.8%</b>
Business	8	4	14	9	5	<b>40</b>	<b>8%</b>
Athlete Sport	60	57	39	28	14	<b>198</b>	<b>39.6%</b>
Physical Appearance	0	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>	<b>0%</b>
Other athletes/Sport	6	1	6	10	2	<b>25</b>	<b>5%</b>
Reposting Content	2	0	0	0	0	<b>2</b>	<b>0.4%</b>
Landmarks	2	8	10	6	5	<b>31</b>	<b>6.2%</b>
Cause Support	4	1	6	1	3	<b>15</b>	<b>3%</b>
Athlete Victory	16	20	4	29	29	<b>98</b>	<b>19.6%</b>
Nationalism	2	6	9	9	5	<b>25</b>	<b>5%</b>

The analysis of posted content reveals gender-based distinctions in social media self-presentation. Male athletes focus on sport-related imagery, nationalism, and personal life to engage with their audience, with limited attention to advocacy or external causes. In contrast, female athletes place greater emphasis on personal and celebratory content while avoiding posts that highlight their physical appearance. The presence of cause-related advocacy in female athletes' posts, absent in male athletes' accounts, suggests a nuanced approach to self-presentation where women use social media not only for engagement but also for broader social influence. These findings underscore how gender norms shape the digital portrayal of athletes, influencing both content creation and audience interaction. Understanding these gendered self-presentation patterns provides a foundation for exploring their broader theoretical and cultural implications. This study's theoretical contribution expands on various aspects related to the self-presentation theory in the context of the Middle Eastern World, particularly Egypt. While previous scholars have examined Goffman's (1959) theory, this study offers unique

insights by applying it specifically to the Egyptian sports industry. Despite the growing interest in this area, limited comprehensive research has been conducted thus far. This research sheds light on the disparities in online behavior between male and female Egyptian athletes, examining the impact of cultural norms and cyberbullying on the online self-presentation of female athletes. The practical implications of this research are multi-fold as it emphasises the importance of prioritising different forms of content, particularly photos, to convey the desired self-presentation and engage with the target audience effectively.

## 5. Study Limitations and Future Research

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. Firstly, its focus on the Egyptian context may limit the generalizability of findings to other Middle Eastern countries, where restrictions on athletes, particularly female athletes. Additionally, while captions accompanying athletes' photographs were considered, their textual content was not analyzed, as the study prioritized visual elements over written communication. Future research can address these gaps by exploring different cultural contexts, incorporating multiple social media platforms, and including a more diverse range of athletes from various sporting backgrounds. Firstly, applying self-presentation theory across different cultural contexts would provide valuable comparative insights into the Egyptian sports sector and expand the theoretical framework, especially given the scarcity of research on sports communication through images in the Arab world. Additionally, examining how cultural influences shape the online self-presentation of male and female athletes across other Middle Eastern nations would contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of these dynamics. Secondly, studying Egyptian athletes who live abroad and compete for non-Egyptian teams presents another avenue for exploration, particularly in terms of their self-presentation strategies, online engagement, and the cultural perceptions of Egyptian fans towards them. Third, nationalistic imagery emerged as a significant theme in this study, reinforcing the emotional connection between fans and athletes through national team representation. While this study identified nationalistic content as a major category, future research could further investigate the impact of national team performance on athletes' self-image, particularly in a sentimental and emotionally driven sports culture like Egypt. Finally, as fans are central to sports media and engagement, analyzing the specific metrics of fan interaction and its influence on athletes' online behavior would be a valuable extension of this study. Despite existing research on fan engagement, further exploration of how online interactivity shapes an athlete's self-presentation remains a crucial area for investigation.

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