

Interview With Florian Alt and Petros Parganas, Adidas Global Football

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The wide adoption of social media by fans, as well as the use of social media for marketing purposes by sport organizations, has increased interest in the topic area from the academic community (Abeza et al., 2013). Indeed, the *International Journal of Sport Communication* has been one of the key platforms for accommodating such a scholarly activity, which spans settings such as international sport federations (e.g., Winand et al., 2019), national sport federations (e.g., Naraine & Parent, 2016), college sports (e.g., Watkins & Lee, 2016), or professional teams (e.g., Maderer et al., 2018), to name but a few. I, personally, have been lucky and privileged to join forces with Dr. Petros Parganas, who convinced me that I should (from time to time) shift my research focus from governance and social responsibility to social media, branding, and communication. The result has been an interesting stream of research (i.e., Anagnostopoulos et al., 2018; Parganas & Anagnostopoulos, 2015; Parganas et al., 2015; Parganas, Anagnostopoulos, & Chadwick, 2017; Parganas, Liasko, & Anagnostopoulos, 2017) that has a common denominator: soccer (football). So, I could not let the chance pass by when I was told by Parganas that he would be joining the digital marketing team at Adidas Football. “Congratulations, but please, offer the world of sport some insights from within when you feel it’s the right timing,” my text message to him read. Petros not only positively responded to my request but also managed to bring along the vice president of global brand communications at Adidas Football, Florian Alt.

Anagnostopoulos: What can you tell me about your department, your current activities, and your leadership role with the organization?

Florian: The Adidas Global Football team covers brand communications, partnerships and communities, retail, public relations, and social, all of whom work together to create a coherent strategy for the brand around our products and the most important moments in the football calendar. We collaborate to ensure that we are speaking clearly to our consumers and that whatever touchpoint you interact with Adidas in football, it is clear what we represent as a brand. The challenge, as a business that has a lot of products and a variety of sponsored clubs, federations, and assets, is aligning the different channels to ensure that everything has

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Florian Alt — Vice president of global brand communications, Adidas Football.

a consistent feel and message. Brand communications sets the direction and strategy while public relations and social make sure our messaging is clearly communicated through media, influencers, and on our own social channels. Retail manages our sales points and how product is presented and interacted with by consumers at point of purchase, and partnerships and communities work with everyone from UEFA (Union of European Football Associations) to EA Sports to bring our brand story to life in different spaces and our key cities.

Petros: The digital analytics department works across the business, providing capabilities on how we are performing digitally and at the same time delivering tactical and strategic insights to continuously improve digital performance on a generic business-unit (BU) level, as well as on specific BU activation levels. In that sense, we not only analyze campaigns or events but also try to deal with strategic business questions in close collaboration with all BU departments. That means that we support the digital planning process of the BU across all platforms. That also means that part of our job is to educate the BU on key digital-analytics topics to foster an analytics culture.

Anagnostopoulos: Looking at the evolution of the strategy over the last few years, how this has affected your department?

Florian: Across the industry, there has been a shift away from big advertising campaigns and moving toward a greater focus on digital content. The audience we want to reach predominantly consumes news and media on social channels. That's not to say that large-scale television ads won't give you reach if you are trying to communicate a message on a large scale. However, if you are looking to create a meaningful relationship between the brand and your audience, you need to live and