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Women In Formula 1 - A Social Media Campaign Designed To Promote F1 Academy

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WOMEN IN FORMULA 1 - A SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGN DESIGNED
TO PROMOTE F1 ACADEMY

By
MADISEN MICHEL

A PROFESSIONAL PROJECT PRESENTED TO
THE SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATION
OF FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF SCIENCE

FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

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Executive Summary

Since its inception 74 years ago, Formula 1 as we know it today, has been a boys club. However, over the past several years, women in sports are doing everything they can to prove the world wrong. Formula 1 can be a girls club too. Strides have been made to further prove this fact: women deserve a place in motorsports just as much as men. Whether it be administrative, creative, mechanical, or behind the wheel; we have seen changes begin. Now the question is, how do we come up with a better plan to further promote and encourage the inclusion of women in Formula 1? This campaign is built around that plan. The goal is to utilize an imperative part of our everyday lives and society: the media. Specifically, we will generate a social media campaign that builds off of the excitement currently surrounding Formula 1. Utilizing the existing social media accounts of Formula 1, the teams and drivers, and the content generated by Netflix's show 'Drive To Survive', there will be an emphasis placed on the women in Formula 1 and encouraging the addition of more women in the space.

The promotion of Formula 1's all female racing series F1 Academy, is the main focus. We believe that by promoting this unique series we can encourage girls and women to know they are capable of anything. F1 Academy is an incredible racing series that is owned and financially backed by Formula 1, meaning the parent company believes in what they are doing. Having received encouragement by Formula 1 President and CEO Stefano Domenicali, now the series needs promotion, in the form of this campaign. Social media and 'Drive To Survive' are the perfect catalysts for this campaign and are sure to bring well deserved attention to all the wonderful talent that is a part of F1 Academy.

Problem Statement

The client, Formula 1, is looking to promote the inclusion of women in the sport. Currently, Formula 1 is mainly made up of men, but the goal of this campaign is to level the playing field a bit more. Recently, we witnessed the implementation of F1 Academy, a women only racing series, made up of 5 teams and 15 drivers, 10 of whom are supported by Formula 1 teams. The goal of this series is to give female drivers the opportunity to be represented on a larger scale in the motorsport world. By having their own women only feeder series into Formula 1, there is a larger opportunity for exposure, whereas prior, it was much harder for female drivers to receive attention for their talents. While this addition to the sport is much needed and a fantastic opportunity, there is more than can be done to promote the series.

Strides have also been made for women to hold other positions of importance within the teams themselves. There are a plethora of career options within motorsport in general, but especially within Formula 1. We are starting to see more female representation in Formula 1 media, such as presenters like Natalie Pinkham, Laura Winter, and Lissie Mackintosh. There are women like Hannah Schmitz, Claire Williams, and Susie Wolff, who hold positions on the mechanical and business side of the sport. Keep in mind that the names I have mentioned are a few of the women who have really fought to be known names in the world of Formula 1.

With all that being said, the overall problem for the client is exposure, promotion, and encouragement for more women to join their team. The campaign will include social media content geared towards representing women in Formula 1, this promotion will be coming from Formula 1 drivers. The largest factor for the sports success is its loyal fan base and if we can utilize the teams and drivers that they know and love to interact with and promote these women, we will have an extremely successful campaign.

Formula 1

History

Racing, in one form or another, has existed for centuries, but Formula 1 specifically, got its start in 1950. Grand Prix racing has occurred since the 1800s, solidifying itself as a staple in the motorsport world. As time went on, Formula 1 was developed and the first world champion was none other than Italy's Giuseppe Farina.

Safety

During the early years of Formula 1 racing, it was a widely accepted fact that a career as a driver could very likely result in injury or death. The 1960s and 1970s saw the worst of the danger, but the more severe risks would continue until 2014. Safety is an absolutely integral part of the sport and it's something that needs to be discussed. Marshalls, or those who are first to the scene in the event of a crash, have been a part of the Formula 1 safety plan since the sports inception. In 1952, 2 years later, helmets were finally made mandatory, and we wouldn't witness another added safety requirement until 1975 when fire-resistant race suits were made obligatory. Over the following 39 years, more safety measures would be implemented, such as barriers, run-off areas, a refueling ban, the safety car, a pit lane speed limit, a headrest, an accelerometer, and even more devices and technological advancements. However, even with all of these things there were still a significant amount of injuries and deaths in the event of a crash. In 2018, after much advocacy, the halo was introduced. This life-saving device is just that, life saving. Over the last 6 years the world has witnessed the halo save multiple drivers' lives. The halo is an extremely sturdy piece of carbon fibre that sits on the top portion of the car, right above the driver's head. The halo has prevented drivers heads from hitting the ground in the event the car flips and has also prevented another car from hitting the driver in a collision.

Championships

Modern day Formula 1 consists of large amounts of safety in every area to ensure all those involved are protected. There are a total of 10 teams, each with 2 drivers, meaning there are 20 total drivers. While Formula 1 results in the world champion, just as it did in its first year, there are some added components now as well. There is a World Champion and a Constructor's Champion. All 20 drivers are competing to earn the most points, each race results in points that get added up throughout the season. If you finish a race in the top 10, you earn a different level of points depending on your position, but if you finish out of the top 10 you don't get anything. At the end of the season, whichever driver has earned the most points is that season's World Champion. Everybody is also fighting to be the Constructor's Champion. Even though every driver is fighting for their own points, they are also trying to work together with their teammate to earn as many points as possible. The more points the 2 drivers on a team earn, the more points that team, or constructor, earns. At the end of the season, the points from the team are added up and whoever wins is that season's Constructor's Champion.

Progression

It isn't easy to make it to Formula 1. This is a sport and a career that you truly dedicate your whole life to. Most drivers have been training in the sport in some capacity since they were very young, around the ages of 4-6 years old. You begin your career in karting and as you get better and win more races, you begin traveling the world for karting races. Eventually, if you're good enough, you make your way into Formula 3, the first step on the road to Formula 1. There are programs that lead right to driving in Formula 1. You start in Formula 3, move up to Formula 2, and hopefully are invited to Formula 1. One of the many downsides of the sport is the astronomical cost. Starting off in karting is already an astounding expense, but as you move up,

you have to continue to sponsor yourself or find others to help, and the prices continue to go up. To drive in Formula 1 you need to earn enough points in the other programs to be given a Super License, and you need to be invited to join a team. Formula 1 is often referred to as ‘The Pinnacle of Motorsport’ because there are only 20 seats available to drive, which severely limits the amount of those who make it to that level, even though there are hundreds, if not thousands, of children, teenagers, young adults, and adults who are vying for a spot.

Women In Formula 1

History

While women have been attempting to break out into the sport for years, it has always been extremely difficult. The 1958 and 1959 seasons brought Maria Teresa de Filippis, the first woman to race at the highest level of the sport. Lella Lombardi would join Formula 1 15 years later, earning the first and only points earned by a woman in the history of the sport. She was 1 year into her 2 year stint in Formula 1 and after she left there still hasn’t been another woman who is a regular driver at that level. In 1992 Giovanna Amati would attempt to qualify for a Formula 1 Grand Prix and after her failure, no other women has attempted to qualify. While the path to competing in a Formula 1 Grand Prix has evolved, the difficulty to race as a woman remains the same.

W Series

In 2019 sponsors came together to launch the W Series, an all women racing series that would allow for proper female racing representation. This series lasted until 2022 when ultimately the funding ran out and they were forced to come to a halt. While unsuccessful, the W Series encouraged conversation around women in racing, especially at a level as high as Formula

1 and the obstacles women face while attempting to reach that level. Former W Series driver, Alice Powell, shares the sentiment that the series made a difference when she stated that

“the series did not fail. Its impact extended beyond the increasing number of women competing on track. Representation matters, and although the two series have many differences, the W Series helped build momentum for women in motorsport. But F1 Academy has the resources to work off of and expand the vision”.

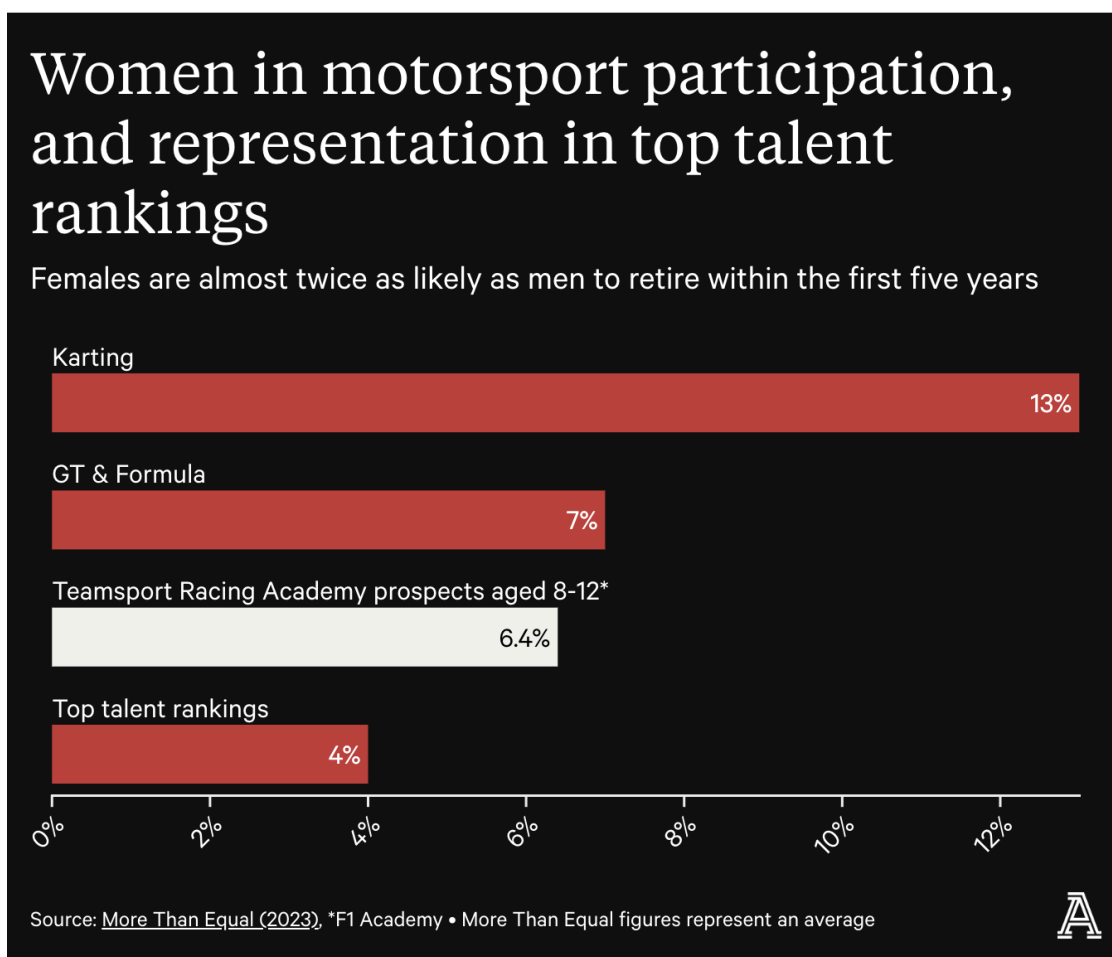
F1 Academy

Both the W Series and F1 Academy have the same goals, but one survived and one didn't. There are a few key differences that are leading to the success of F1 Academy, one of them being that Formula 1 is backing the project rather than outside sponsors. The idea came from Formula 1 President and CEO Stefano Domenicali and Greg Maffei from Liberty Media, Formula 1's parent company. They wanted to create a series that takes advantage and utilizes the worldwide shift that is occurring in favour of women's sports. Domenicali said, “We created F1 Academy to bring about real and lasting change to ensure young female talent have the right system in place to follow and achieve their dreams”.

The goal of F1 Academy is to promote the incredible female driving talent that is not typically recognized. The series' managing director Susie Wolff said, “F1 Academy is going to drive change in the motorsport industry as we create the best possible structure to find and nurture female talent both on and off the racetrack. We want to inspire women around the world to follow their dreams...we will reach a global audience and empower the next generation of young women to break down barriers in motorsport and beyond”.

Discover Your Drive

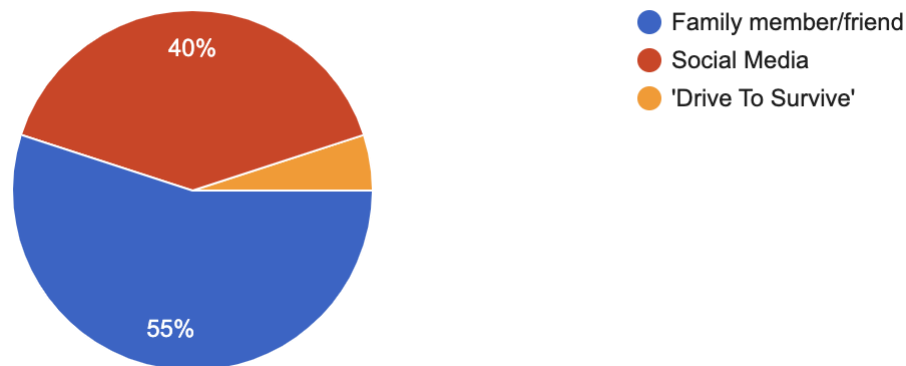
As stated earlier, karting is the place to begin your racing career in Formula 1 and the same thing is true of a career with F1 Academy. In order to avoid the inevitable risk of running out of female drivers, F1 Academy created their Discover Your Drive program, which supports young girls on their journey in karting. If these young girls can get support in the early years of their career like their male counterparts then, hopefully, they'll make it far enough to compete in F1 Academy; avoiding the risk of running out of drivers and having to end the series. Other than preventing an eventual lack of drivers, it is also the program's goal to encourage young girls to join the sport and stay there. A study conducted by More Than Equal in 2023 found that as young girls move up in competition levels, they tend to leave the sport.



Research

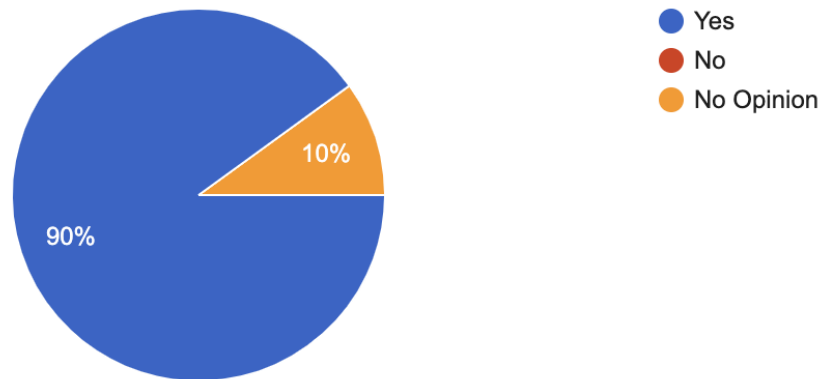
Survey

A group of women between the ages of 18 and 30 were surveyed in regards to their thoughts about female representation in Formula 1. Some of the questions asked were pertaining to the length of time the participants have been a fan of Formula 1, their social media habits, how they were introduced to the sport, and if they feel that F1 Academy could be better promoted, specifically by utilizing existing Formula 1 social media channels. The results were interesting. I truly thought that a larger group of people would have been introduced to the sport through the Netflix show 'Drive To Survive', however this was not the case because over half of the participants were introduced to Formula 1 by friends or family.



In order to get a better idea of how the participants felt about female representation in Formula 1 they were asked 2 questions that yielded the same results. “Do you feel that F1 Academy could be better promoted?” and “Do you feel that Formula 1 teams’/drivers’ social media can positively promote women in Formula 1?” The results revealed that 90 percent of those surveyed agreed and 10 percent had no opinion.

This leads to a conclusion that people believe that women in motorsport and F1 Academy can be better promoted to the public, and utilizing existing Formula 1 teams' and drivers' social media to do so could prove effective.



Comments

At the end of the survey there was an option for anonymous comments relating to the topic at hand. One participant shared that they

“believe that not all F1 teams and drivers show a big and constant support for the F1 Academy or just women in motorsports in general. While the F1 teams do sponsor the academy now, I believe they could do more to show their support for women in motorsports and especially for those girls in the F1 Academy. Additionally, more contributions/more opportunities can and should be made for women in motorsports”.

This comment truly highlights the importance of having women in motorsports not just in general, but at the forefront of the sport. Young girls and other women need to be able to see people who look like them involved in the things they also love. This point is further proved by another anonymous survey comment saying,

“there are always times that women can seem put aside in sports, however having a sport that has a whole dedicated part to women, such as Formula 1, that isn't just focused in the

States can be very empowering and inspirational for all women young and old to put out their love for the sport. Such as me who was never ready to be open about being a fan of F1 for 10 years until many girls came into the sport and now the community has grown to have a spot for any girl with an interest in Formula 1 to join!”

This anonymous comment puts into words a sentiment that many female sports fans can relate to. PlayToday found that women make up nearly half of the sports fan base in the United States, but sports marketing is more geared towards men. This can lead many young girls and women to feel as if they are alone in their love of sports and can discourage them from being the passionate fans they are.

Drive To Survive

In 2019 Netflix released their Formula 1 docuseries ‘Drive To Survive’. The behind the scenes look grants viewers an opportunity to see what’s really going on in the world of Formula 1, as well as a chance to get to know the drivers and teams better. The show has been credited with bringing in a plethora of new fans as well as boosting the popularity of open-wheel racing in the U.S. In March of 2022, Morning Consult conducted a poll, asking close to 1,900 adult U.S. Formula 1 fans why they became fans of the sport, and 53 percent gave credit to ‘Drive To Survive’. During season 5’s debut week, Nielsen found that the hit show reached nearly 224 million gross viewing minutes; crushing the year prior’s 169.1 million viewing minutes.

'Drive to Survive' Week 1 audiences

SEASON/YEAR	VIEWERSHIP	PAST SEASON VIEWERSHIP	TOTAL VIEWERSHIP
Season 1/2019	288,286		
Season 2/2020	199,308	32,416	231,174
Season 3/2021	243,445	57,669	301,114
Season 4/2022	407,678	68,334	476,012
Season 5/2023	569,884	73,613	643,497

This has led to a 10 percent growth in U.S. Formula 1 fans since the show's debut in 2019, the American fanbase growing from 44.9 million to 49.2 million in 2022. Formula 1 races were also being shown live on television in 2022, on ABC, ESPN, and ESPN2 where the viewing was averaging 1.21 million - the first time American audiences have averaged over 1 million views for the sport.

Formula 1 U.S. TV viewership averages

YEAR	PER-RACE AVERAGE
2022	1.21 million
2021	949,000
2020	608,000
2019	672,000
2018	554,000
2017	538,000 (NBC)

In 2021, sports accounted for 98 percent of the 50 top viewed programs. Nielsen decided to find out how ‘Drive To Survive’ was affecting the landscape of television and Formula 1 fans in the U.S. They found that over 360,000 viewers who didn’t watch the latter part of the 2021 Formula 1 season, were watching the 2022 season after viewing ‘Drive To Survive’. The show also acts as an important educational tool for fans, both new and old. Nielsen found that after watching ‘Drive To Survive’ 34 percent of people became a fan after watching, 30 percent felt they understood the sport more, and 29 percent felt more engaged with the sport.

SWOT Analysis

Strengths

Formula 1 and F1 Academy both have a number of strengths. One of the biggest strengths when it comes to Formula 1, is the size of the following they have. F1 Academy could definitely use that platform to further their mission. However, one of F1 Academy’s strengths is the fact that the series’ small size. This allows for a unique intimacy of communication, and fan engagement, encouraging the series to grow in a way that positively affects everyone involved.

Weaknesses

A weakness that Formula 1 has is its lack of diversity, for this specific purpose, especially female representation. A weakness F1 Academy faces is its lack of exposure. The series is trying to promote itself, but in a relatively saturated market dominated by men, it can be hard to reach larger audiences that have not already been exposed to it.

Opportunities

Formula 1 has prime opportunities to utilize social media as a tool to attract attention to their racing. This can bring not only more awareness of the sport, but it can also lead to an increase in fans. F1 Academy actually has an incredible opportunity to use the teams’ and

drivers' social media accounts to generate natural and casual content as a way for the world to get to know who everybody is.

Threats

I truly don't believe that there are many threats when it comes to Formula 1. There is the threat of competition due to Formula 3 and Formula 2, but truthfully Formula 1 is in a league of its own. While there are threats to F1 Academy, such as the other Formula series, the lack of new drivers, and the smaller amount of fan attention, the F1 Academy staff are actively working towards fixing these threats.

Strategy

IMC Goal and Strategies

The goal of this campaign is to promote the F1 Academy series utilizing existing social media channels. These channels will include Netflix's 'Drive To Survive', the Formula 1 accounts, the F1 Academy Accounts, and the accounts that belong to current Formula 1 teams and drivers.

Target Market Profile

The market that we are aiming to reach are sports fans, specifically those already interested in motorsports - especially Formula 1. We are also targeting women because we believe that they are an imperative to this campaign succeeding. Women are currently playing a massive role in the success of Formula 1 and if we are looking to promote the all female racing series, F1 Academy, they are the perfect catalyst.

Tactics

Social Media

Utilizing the existing social media accounts from each series, the teams, and the drivers already provides a large amount of exposure. The Formula 1 Instagram account has 28 million followers, while the F1 Academy Instagram account only has 590,000 followers. Taking data from Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook, the official Mercedes account has close to 29 million followers. The data from those 3 platforms shows similar follower counts for Red Bull, Ferrari, and McLaren; all of the teams having over 20 million followers. The rest of the teams have significantly less team followers, but their counts are still above 4 million.



With the above data, the plan is to have the teams post about F1 Academy on their social media accounts. By posting on accounts with large followings, tagging the F1 Academy account (or joint posting), and tagging the drivers, there will be much more exposure happening for the series.

Formula 1 and the teams all film short videos full of fun and entertaining content that they post on social media platforms, including YouTube. Part of the social media campaign would be to have the teams include their female F1 Academy driver in their fun content. For example, Williams Racing has started a comical laid-back podcast with a video component. This podcast is hosted by their Formula 1 drivers Alex Albon and Logan Sargeant. They are occasionally accompanied by guests on the show and recently they had their F1 Academy counterpart, Lia Block on one of their episodes. This was a wonderful example of including their female teammate and promoting them and what they do to Formula 1 fans. It granted the public an opportunity to get to know her better and hear about F1 Academy. Including content like this and more creative ideas including the Formula 1 teams and their female F1 Academy teammate is an imperative part of this campaign

Drive To Survive

In order to further expose F1 Academy, we believe giving them some screen time during Netflix's 'Drive To Survive' would be extremely beneficial. Since the Formula 1 teams and drivers have been publicly strengthening their relationships with the F1 Academy teams and drivers, having some content on the show would make sense. This thought process is furthered by the fact that F1 Academy is a series within Formula 1, so showcasing a new series that the company is trying to promote is helpful to both entities. This would also be a fantastic opportunity to explain the way in which F1 Academy works. As a new series, it is imperative to

gain exposure and give fans an opportunity to learn the rules of this new racing format. While conducting my survey, I received a comment pertaining to understanding the rules of F1 Academy,

“It took me a while to understand how the women’s racing worked, if they competed in the men’s categories or had their own and what level it was compared to the men etc. So in that respect I think there can definitely be more information, especially for people who haven’t been a part of the motorsport community all their lives”.

Giving female representation, in the form of highlighting F1 Academy, ‘Drive To Survive’ will become part of the growing women in sports movement. This point is further emphasized by the rest of the above comment, stating,

“I think women’s basketball and tennis and golf have come a long way recently in terms of more exposure and higher value placed on athletes and their abilities and accomplishments. So with the right people and situations, the same thing can definitely happen in motorsport”.

Representing women in sports is something that is extremely important in the world right now, and Formula 1 has the perfect outlet in the form of ‘Drive To Survive’. The show is all about the behind-the-scenes facets of the world of Formula 1, while also talking about important topics. Highlighting F1 Academy is a great way to promote this wonderful, new, all female racing series, while simultaneously proving that ‘Drive To Survive’ is aware of current hot-topics and wants to promote women’s sports.

Importance

There is a much larger reason for promoting this all female racing series; the importance of showing girls and women that they can play at any level. UN Women said it best themselves,

“sport has the power to change lives. The ability to drive gender equality by teaching women and girls teamwork, self-reliance, resilience and confidence. Women in sport defy gender stereotypes and social norms, make inspiring role models, and show men and women as equals”.

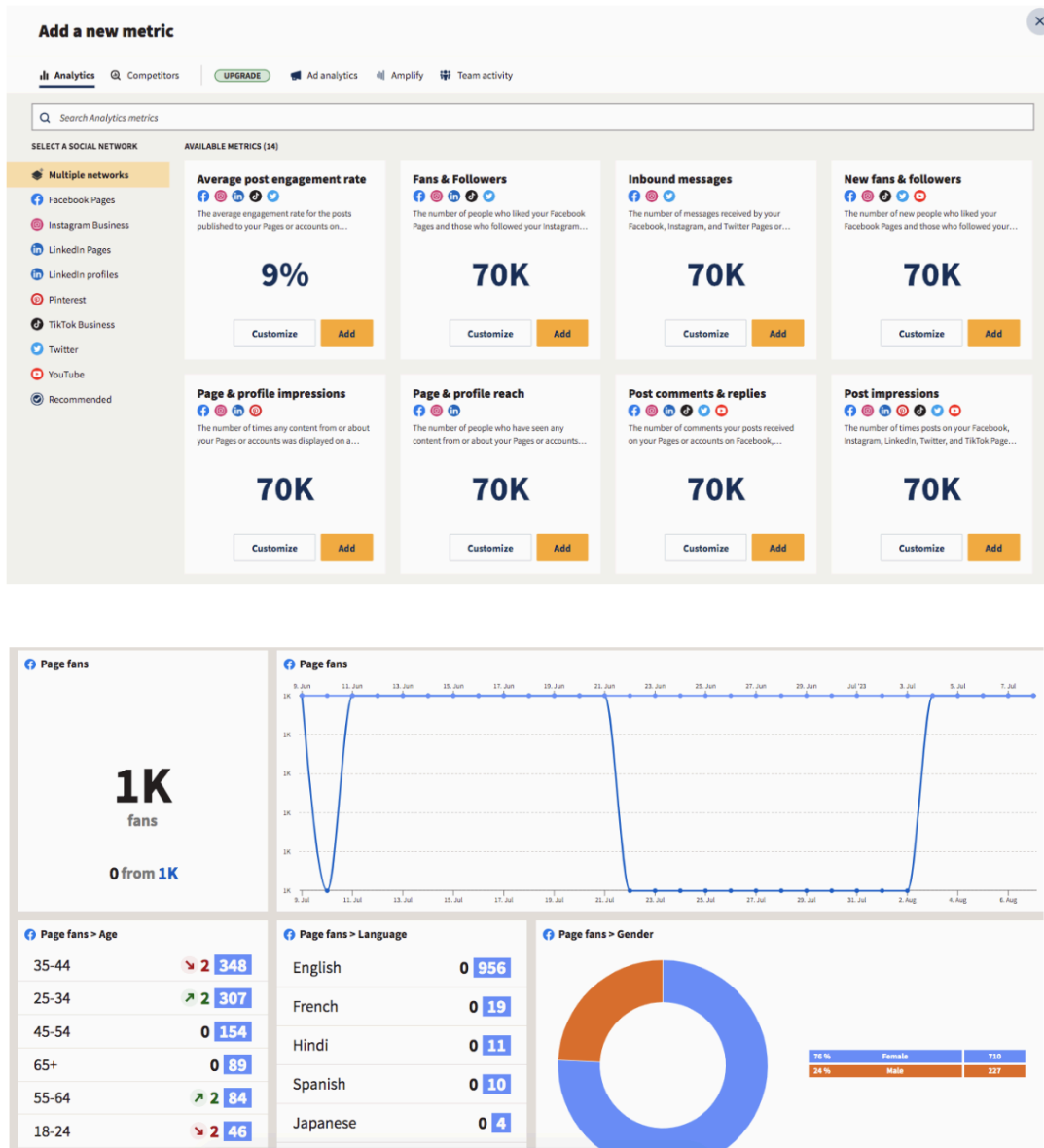
Wasserman Report found that women’s sports received an average 15 percent share of media coverage in 2022; if this continues then the share of women’s sports media coverage should go up to 20 percent by 2025. While this might not seem like a large amount, the amount of women’s sports media coverage has nearly tripled in the last 5 years. By promoting women’s racing, we can continue the conversation about women’s sports, hopefully encouraging fans to watch other all female athletes. Dr.Beth Dietz conducted a study that analyzed the viewership of male versus female sports and how once exposed to female sports, people would be more likely to continue to tune in to those games.

Evaluation

In order to properly assess the efficacy of this campaign we would need to collect data prior to the start date. Creating a database full of all the necessary information is the first, crucial step. The number of followers on all participating social media accounts would need to be logged, as well as the number of ‘Drive To Survive’ viewers. Collecting demographic information about followers and viewers is also an important step. Being able to differentiate between an increase in female or male followers, existing or new fans, or even age and location are important data points to have.

The post-campaign information would include updated numbers on all of the pre-campaign data, as well as all the new numbers. Tracking social media metrics like engagement, impressions, reach, ROI, etc. is extremely helpful when it comes to measuring how successful the campaign is. This is also information that is attainable for ‘Drive To Survive’ and

can be used to assess any new viewers for the show. The final step would be to analyze all the collected data and compare. Here are two examples of some of the data we would be collecting and their formatting:



We are confident that our campaign will yield positive results and provide ample positive promotion for F1 Academy, growing their online following, fan base, and people's overall awareness of the new racing series.

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