

The Improvement of Brand Identity and Sales with UNRL

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Abstract: Currently, customers perceive UNRL as a unique brand with a craft feel. Constants for this brand are quality fabrics, unique styles, and a more tapered athletic fit. This higher quality is reflected in the company name UNRL, which refers to the term "unreal," used in sports to describe the pinnacle of performance and exceptional moments. UNRL's core mission includes "leaving a legacy," which entails engaging in causes that are meaningful to customers. As UNRL expands, it will need to keep its brand and mission relevant to its expanding core of customers. This article determines marketing strategies by analyzing the influence of influencers on consumer behavior on social media and the costs to be borne. The analysis identifies influencers that businesses can leverage to help refine and improve their brand identity to better differentiate themselves amongst their competitors in the athleisure industry.

Keywords: UNRL, Brand, athletes

1. Introduction

Individuals are spending more time on social media and closely following the activities of their favorite influencers. As influencers share their day-to-day with their followers, fans pick up on the products they use and wear. Because they advocate various products via social media, these influencers have a big impact on consumer behavior, and businesses can use influencers to help grow their target audience [1,2].

Nike is a prime example of this phenomenon. According to the article "5 Benefits to Athlete Endorsements", Nike started working with Michael Jordan in 1984, and by 2009, the "Nike Jordan" brand accounted for 75% of basketball shoe sales in the USA and accounted for 10.8 percent of the total sneaker market [3]. Market sensations are made possible by the public's adoration and worship of influencers. When fans admire and idolize someone, they generally connotate them to wearing high-quality products, which leads to fans wanting to buy the same products and partake in similar activities.

Influencer programs are benefitting brands with their new marketing strategy, allowing for growth in the current target market and expansion of that market. In this report, Clark Consulting will present the analysis of this plan and the benefits it can bring in detail for the company and the influencer/athlete.

Clark Consulting seeks to help UNRL settle on athlete partnerships that will provide them with long-term success between athlete and athleisure relations. Clark Consulting's proposal plan for UNRL x Team UNLMITD is a comprehensive plan that will give a face behind UNRL's brand and

give them the exposure they need. Clark Consulting will begin this plan with three athletes but encourage UNRL to expand even further with more athletes in the future. The team did not just pick any ordinary athletes, but ones that are realistically attainable for UNRL and align with its goals as an up-and-coming athleisure company. All three of the athletes are professional athletes in the NHL, PGA, and NFL. Clark Consulting is confident that by bringing together three distinct athletes with very diverse backgrounds, UNRL will be able to establish its niche when it comes to expanding into new target markets.

The solution to boosting UNRL's social media engagement is to partner with Kellen Mond, Lexi Thompson, and Jason Zucker to create a Team UNLMITD. Clark Consulting believes that these athletes could provide a substantial increase in UNRL's growth as a company by providing them with a significant increase in their social media growth via Instagram posts. Clark Consulting recognizes the potential that each of these athletes could bring to UNRL's future in social media, as each athlete could bring the fanbases of their sports. A growth for UNRL's Instagram base also could provide an extremely unique and beneficial opportunity due to Instagram's features and picture-based post style allowing a more visual style of branding. Clark Consulting believes that the acquisition and implementation of Team UNLMITD would be both within reason and prove to be very effective in UNRL's future growth.

2. Strategy Development

Clark Consulting's selection process for Team UNLMITD consisted of finding athletes that are ideal fits not only due to their sport and fanbases but also by their personality and values. Clark Consulting strived to find athletes who fit not only the basic requirements but those athletes who fit the mold and values of UNRL so they could truly embody what it means to be an UNRL athlete. Team UNLMITD was built surrounding these focuses, and is composed of Kellen Mond, Lexi Thompson, and Jason Zucker.

Kellen Mond is a rookie quarterback for the Minnesota Vikings. His current affiliation with the Minnesota Vikings could help continue the partnership that UNRL already has with the Vikings [4]. Lexi Thompson is an American professional golfer on the PGA Tour [5]. Jason Zucker is a Left Winger who currently plays with the Pittsburgh Penguins [6], however for much of his career he played for the Minnesota Wild. All three athletes possess a fairly large follower base on Instagram - 68.3 thousand, 523 thousand, and 78.9 thousand, respectively. The difference in their Instagram audiences provides UNRL with the potential to attract notice from multiple fan bases with them on Team UNLMITD. All three athletes also fit UNRL's mold as characters. During Mond's time at Texas A&M, he demonstrated the values of "leaving a legacy" and "we before me" as he was an outspoken activist his senior year in college in the removal of a controversial statue according to ESPN [7]. Lexi has worked with and sponsored the Wounded Warrior Project throughout her career, as well as previously working with the Seal Legacy Foundation as reported by The Golf Channel [8]. Zucker's Give16 charity is currently collaborating with UNRL to help fund the University of Minnesota Masonic Children's Hospital. All three athletes have so far in their careers demonstrated amazing qualities both on the field and off the field, which makes them great members of Team UNLMITD.

3. Various Influence Factors

UNRL will use this strategic collaboration to help with social media marketing. According to Sprout Social, 55% of consumers learn about new brands on social media [9]. With three Instagram-verified athletes promoting UNRL's products in their posts, UNRL can effectively build its Instagram following. Furthermore, Gen Z and Millennials, who are UNRL's target market, are much more inclined to discover brands like UNRL through social media.



Figure 1: Practical sponsorship ideas that lay out 6 main benefits that businesses would gain through sponsorships.

The strength of the Halo Effect stems from cognitive bias, where followers unknowingly transfer their positive feelings to a brand from the respective athlete.

Through sponsorship, UNRL is able to effectively reach an audience of engaged and passionate fans, negating any time or money that would be wasted trying to search and build their target audience.

With customers becoming increasingly harder to reach through traditional marketing methods, sponsorship enables UNRL to create personal experiences. UNRL can combine their brand message, interactive elements, and audience in a live setting.

Social proof is a phenomenon that regards how others influence our own behaviors. For example, consumers would be more inclined to go to a busy store over an empty one with the belief that it is better. The only proof of this is that the busy store has more popularity.

Team UNLMITD would be able to disperse more information to a larger audience including any events, competitions, sales promotions, product announcements, and more brand exposure.

With the combination of having an engaged audience along with the “halo effect” and “social proof” the opportunity for word-of-mouth referrals dramatically increases.

4. Financial Analysis of Team UNLMITD

As influencer marketing thrives in today’s social media powerhouse, social media has begun to categorize its influencers. Team UNLMITD will feature influencers from two unique categories: mid-tier influencers & macro-influencers (Appendix A: Understanding Influencer Marketing Tiers). The categorization allows influencers to be easily grouped and separated to allow applying compensation and incentivization to their social media engagement and performance. Both Kellen Mond and Jason Zucker represent UNRL’s development with mid-tier influencers, while Lexi Thompson will represent the macro-influencer division. These tiers will allow UNRL to see active growth in the following of the athletes while balancing the costs of the influencer campaign. According to Rhythm Influence, “Many of the best campaigns utilize a mix of influencer tiers to hit different audience segments” [10]. Team UNLMITD provides a diverse range of influencer tiers that will allow UNRL to target a variety of audiences and bring brand awareness to the company.

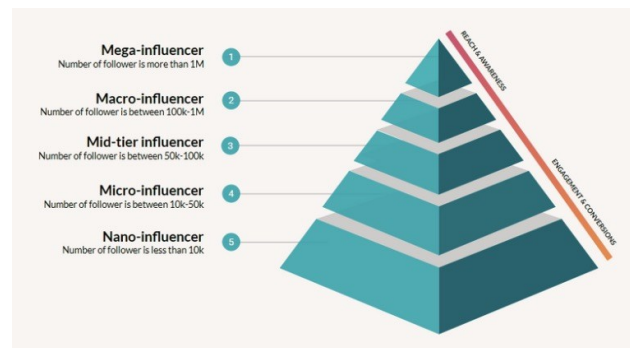


Figure 2: Influencer Division

4.1. Pay-Per-Like Strategy

While influencer marketing has a variety of compensation strategies, a pay-per-like model will allow TEAM UNLMITD to be consistently incentivized to increase engagement and activity on social media while allowing UNRL to keep its marketing budget minimized. The model will allow the athletes to be compensated for each individual. Typically, with similar models like Cost-Per-Click (CPC), advertisers set a "cost-per-click" that charges the corresponding website for their advertisement. Similarly, the pay-per-like model, set at a rate of \$0.02 per like, will compensate TEAM UNRL for their individual social media successes.

As the followers of an influencer increase, so does the potential of brand exposure for the intended advertisement. With this in mind, Team UNLMITD consists of influencers with already established followings that will ultimately lead to the success of the partnership.

4.2. Engagement Ratio

As stated in Buffer, "when influencers can get their followers to engage with their social media posts, the influencer marketing campaign becomes more effective for the brand as those followers are essentially engaging with the brand." The calculated engagement ratio is essential to monitoring and tracking the success of UNRL's athletes. Most social media marketing experts agree that a good engagement rate is between 1% to 5%. The more followers you have, the harder it is to achieve Hootsuite. Currently, the athletes occupy engagement rates within or exceeding these percentages. In order for UNRL to reach the largest and most engaging group, it is essential that Mond, Thompson, and Zucker sustain their overall interaction. As shown in Table 1, the selected athletes are as follows: All three athletes maintained an average of 4500+ likes for their posts. The engagement ratio is between 2% and 12%, maintaining and even far exceeding the socially defined good engagement ratio.

Table 1: Selected athletes

Acquired Athlete	Kellen Mond	Lexi Thompson	Jason Zucker
Instagram Following	68.3K Followers	524K Followers	78.9K Followers
Average # of Likes per post	8,100 Likes	10,500 Likes	4,700 Likes
Engagement Ratio (Average # of Likes/Following*100)	11.9%	2%	6%

Table 2: Expected Expenses of Athlete Involvement [11]

Acquired Athlete	Kellen Mond	Lexi Thompson	Jason Zucker
Low-Engagement Post Cost Average	2-5k Likes *.02 =\$70.00	5-7k Likes *.02 =\$120.00	500-3k Likes *.02 =\$40.00
Mid-Engagement Post Cost Average	5-8k Likes *.02 =\$130.00	7-10k Likes *.02 =\$170.00	3.5-6k Likes *.02 =\$95.00
High-Engagement Post Cost Average	8-15k Likes *.02 =\$230.00	10-20k Likes *.02 =\$300.00	6-10k Likes *.02 =\$160.00
Engagement Costs (by Post Engagement Predictions)	(L) \$70.00*5=\$350.00 (M) \$130.00*10=\$1,300.00 (H) \$230.00*5=\$1,150.00 0	(L) \$120.00*5=\$600.00 (M) \$170.00*10=\$1,700.00 (H) \$300.00*5=\$1,500.00	(L) \$40.00*5=\$200.00 (M) \$95.00*10=\$950.00 (H) \$160.00*5=\$800.00
Individual Athlete Payout	\$350.00+\$1,300.00+\$1,150.00=\$2,800.00	\$600.00+\$1,700.00+\$1,500.00=\$3,800.00	\$200.00+\$950.00+\$800.00=\$1,950.00
Expected Expense on Athlete Pay-Per-Like Deal	\$2,800.00+\$3,800.00+\$1,950.00=\$8,550.00		

As shown in Table 2, for all three athletes, different degrees of Engagement Post Cost Average are given. The final Expected Expense on Athlete Pay-Per-Like Deal is around \$8,550.00. Incentivisation is essential to maintaining and also encouraging the athletes to join Team UNLMITD. Primarily, we plan on providing each athlete with a UNRL starter pack valued at a combined cost of \$834.00.

4.3. Financials in Summary

Through the combination of a photoshoot, an Instagram marketing plan, and incentivization, UNRL is estimated to spend \$10,084 on the acquisition of Mond, Thompson, and Zucker. With the low overhead and minimal debt UNRL currently has, this investment will come at just a small cost to UNRL. Ultimately, the partnership is expected to regenerate and multiply the revenue through the expansion of e-commerce sales.

5. Implementation Strategies

5.1. Presenting and Securing Athlete Partnerships

The initial phase of implementing Team UNLMITD involves presenting the potential partnerships to Kellen Mond, Lexi Thompson, and Jason Zucker. This critical stage requires meticulous management and oversight to effectively pique their interest in collaborating with UNRL. While Clark Consulting has devised attractive incentives and financial rewards, it is crucial for UNRL to establish a clear direction for negotiations with the athletes. The timing for scheduling meetings with the athletes may vary, but Clark Consulting anticipates a realistic window of approximately one month for this stage.

5.2. Developing Team UNLMITD Marketing Campaigns

Moving forward, the focus will shift to crafting a comprehensive marketing plan that prominently features and celebrates Team UNLMITD. This will involve creating introductory posts showcasing all the athletes together and individual posts highlighting each athlete separately. Additionally, separate campaigns will be devised not only for UNRL's account but also for the individual Instagram accounts of each athlete. The meticulous development of these campaigns, including the creation of twenty posts per athlete, is expected to take about a month.

5.3. Implementing Team UNLMITD Marketing Campaigns on Instagram:

Once the marketing campaigns are ready, UNRL will commence their implementation, introducing Team UNLMITD through the developed posts. On the day of the announcement, introductory posts will be made, followed by a strategic Instagram post plan established during stage two. As this phase involves each athlete releasing twenty posts featuring UNRL, it is essential to ensure a balanced approach to avoid overwhelming their followers. This stage is projected to last several months to achieve maximum impact and engagement.

5.4. Tracking Progress and E-commerce Sales

In stage four, the focus will be on measuring the impact of Team UNLMITD on UNRL's growth and performance. This involves closely monitoring the increase in followers, engagement rate, and e-commerce sales during this period. The simultaneous implementation of stage three and tracking progress will take a couple of weeks to allow for a thorough analysis of the impact of Team UNLMITD.

5.5. Evaluating Success through SM Engagement & E-commerce Sales

The final stage entails a comprehensive evaluation of Team UNLMITD's success for UNRL. An in-depth assessment of the achieved accomplishments and return on investment will be conducted to determine the effectiveness of the partnership. Based on the growth and results achieved during this period, UNRL will make informed decisions about continuing with Team UNLMITD, potentially expanding the team, or exploring new athlete options. This evaluation process is estimated to take around a month following the conclusion of the deals with the athletes.

6. Mitigating the Risks

6.1. Contract/Performance

The immediate risks that are poised towards UNRL with Team UNLMITD are contractual and pay issues. Those issues, however, will ultimately prove to be low risk to UNRL. While athlete refusal is entirely possible, there are many other qualified athletes who fit into the dynamic that Clark Consulting has designed for Team UNLMITD. This same idea applies to pay issues as well. While Clark Consulting does not expect these issues to arise, if they were they can be corrected by moving forward with athletes willing to contract with UNRL.

6.2. Performance/Health

An Athlete's performance and Health are also questionable when concerning Team UNLMITD, as an athlete's performance can directly impact their following. While there is no specific surefire method to guarantee against these risks, they were factored in during contract length planning in order to

minimize these risks. With a 20-post contract, even if a player was to sustain a career-ending injury or retire, the contract would have long expired by the time their following begins to deteriorate later on.

6.3. Social Media Followings/Actions

Instagram is crucial when concerning Team UNLIMITD. For this reason, a sudden drop in social media following as well as the actions taken by the athletes have a major impact on the performance of the athletes. These risks were the cause of why Clark Consulting chose to have a strict criteria basis around the character and values of the athletes. To find athletes who share the same beliefs with UNRL in order to limit the risk of athletes saying anything opposed to UNRL, and the risk of the athlete's lacking integrity.

6.4. Personal Lives/Business Decisions

Team UNLIMITD is at its core a marketing campaign, and for that reason share the risk of an athlete's personal life choices impacting their reputation, and therefore UNRL's reputation. This risk is the cause of why Clark Consulting focused on athletes who previously and currently display strong characteristics that align with UNRL's beliefs. UNRL could also be endangered by their athletes leaving UNRL and partnering with different companies. In order to mitigate this risk, Clark Consulting designed Team UNLIMITD surrounding a set of values and talent. This allows UNRL to then bring in new athletes for Team UNLIMITD in the future.

7. Conclusion

Team UNLIMITD would provide UNRL with opportunities to not only appeal to a larger portion of their target demographic but also to new demographics and new opportunities. With fan bases from the NFL, College Football, NHL, and LPGA, and an appeal to the woman demographics, Team UNLIMITD provides UNRL with a wide variety of opportunities and consumers. Team UNLIMITD also fits the character of UNRL as the athletes comprising the Team also hold very similar values as UNRL does as a company. By using Instagram with its easy-to-share features and Instagram marketplace, Team UNLIMITD would be put in a position to shine for UNRL. Team UNLIMITD will be able to grow a significant fanbase for UNRL while on Instagram due to their fanbases and popularity but should specifically majorly help UNRL's e-commerce growth due to Instagram's online focus as an app. Team UNLIMITD will change UNRL as a company by providing them an increase in their social media engagement on Instagram while bolstering their e-commerce sales.

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