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MORE LIKES, MORE CLIMBING: AN INVESTIGATION OF CLIMBERS' INTENTION TO USE SOCIAL MEDIA FOR SELF-PROMOTION[1]

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Abstract: Building on Ajzen's (1991; 2013) Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), this study aimed to investigate the predictors of social media use among climbers globally. It focused on factors such as attitude, subjective norm, and intention, examining their impact on climbers' self-promotion across various social media platforms. The research encompassed activities spanning from natural environments to competitive sports climbing, emphasizing the evolving role of social media in these contexts. Employing a correlational research design, the study explored how TPB variables influence climbers' engagement with social media for self-promotion within the climbing community. A sample of 142 climbers from 21 countries participated in an online survey, selected through purposeful and convenient sampling methods. All respondents confirmed their use of social media platforms for self-promotion, with Instagram emerging as the primary platform of choice. This research contributes to understanding the intersection of psychological factors and social media behavior among climbers, shedding light on how attitudes, social norms, and intentions shape online self-presentation in adventure sports. By examining these dynamics, the study provides insights into what drives climbers' digital interactions and their implications for broader trends in sports communication and community engagement. Moreover, this study found that female climbers have a higher intention to use social media for self-promotion compared to male climbers.

Keywords: *climbing, social media, self-promotion, theory of planned behavior*

INTRODUCTION

Leading to our examination of how the factors of attitude, subjective norm, and intention, impact social media use among climbers worldwide, let us start by situating the terms *climbing* and *mountaineering* within existing scholarship. Further we explore previous literature and definitions on social media and their implication within the field of sport management. We refer to other scholars who were examining the opportunities and challenges brought by social media and the way they impact athletes. The rise of social media in sport has driven significant academic research, providing sports management experts with essential strategies and operational guidelines to optimize social media practices. Our study focused on self - identified climbers, and the factors that predict their intentions to use social media. This research study facilitates a deeper understanding of the potential factors that impact the way athletes use social media, spanning from natural high-risk environments to sports competition arenas. Perhaps there

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is no other sport as largely dependent on social media promotion as climbing and high-altitude mountaineering. In her book *False Summit*, Rak (2021) posits that the essence of a climb lies not just in the ascent but in the story that follows. Thus, creating identity through narrative is crucial in shaping perceptions of climbing, identity, and the human connection to nature (Rak, 2021). In climbing sports, especially in high-altitude mountaineering where there is no spectatorship nor broadcasting, the narrative is told through the subjective lens of the climber. Rak (2021) discussed the significance of the narratives told by the climbers through autobiographical literature and documentary films, stating that there is no other sport which produces that amount of literature written by the athletes themselves. In this study, we examined social media platforms, specifically Instagram, as a main tool for producing content for self-promotion among climbers since it was identified as the most used platform among all participants.

This study draws on the theory of planned behavior (TPB) and examines the factors driving climbers' intentions to use social media for self-promotion (Ajzen, 1991; 2013). Behavioral intention can be explained through an individual's attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control toward a specific behavior (Ajzen, 1991; 2013), such as using social media for self-promotion. The survey was developed referencing the theory of planned behavior manuals (Ajzen, 2013; Francis et al., 2004) and operationalizes the use of social media for self-promotion as external variable through a series of related direct and indirect measurement items. Furthermore, this study utilized an adopted self-promotion five-item scale and six-item scale for measurement of Social Media Usage both developed by Taylor (2020) that will be further explained in the methods section. The primary scale was adopted from Ajzen (1991; 2013). Two other scales used in this study were the social media usage scale adopted from (Krasnova et al., 2013), followed by the Self-promotion scale (Taylor, 2020). Understanding climbers' intentions to use social media for self-promotion can reveal the factors influencing their actual behavior (Ajzen, 1991; Miller, 2017). Digital technologies online are crucial for branding and international sports sponsorships because they can engage with customers worldwide across various digital platforms (Koronios et al., 2020). We use this standpoint to understand the possible differences in behaviors between specific groups of climbers, such as: gender, and sponsored versus non sponsored athletes.

Mountain Sports and Social Media

Mountain climbing has long been associated with taking risks and overcoming fears (Beedie, 2015; Frison-Roche & Jouty, 1996). This phenomenon and mountain sports, in general, have received relatively little sociological consideration despite the increasing sportification of mountaineering culminating with the debut of sports climbing in the 2020 Tokyo Olympics (Pfister & Gems, 2019). Scholars, at times, refer to the same activities as action, adventure, extreme, or lifestyle sports (Breivik, 2010; Cohen et al., 2018; Thorpe, 2014) and definitions vary. Kerns (2021) considered action sports as unorganized, participant-led, pursuits of risk and creativity in either natural or urban environments. Immonen et al. (2022) used an ecological dynamics framework to advance nuanced definitions of adventure sports with: (i) activity categories (such as adventure and extreme sport niches), (ii) characterizations of specific activities (such as sports climbing and trad climbing) understood as specific forms of life, and (iii), perceptions, cognitions and actions of individuals within these specific activities. Based on this, in this paper, the term *climbing* has a dual meaning: the act of scaling a rock face or a mountain, and an independent sport or discipline, such as *sports climbing, trad climbing, ice climbing,* or *bouldering*, disciplines that vary depending on the style and environment they take place in.

The mid-2010s saw a renewed scholarly interest in action sports (e.g. Thorpe, 2014, 2017; Wheaton, 2015; Van Bottenburg & Salome, 2010). Various scholars explored the cultures of sports like snowboarding, surfing, BMX, BASE jumping, kite-surfing, mountain biking, mountain climbing, and skateboarding. For example, exploring "action sport and the politics of identity" and assessing the trajectory of sports sociology at large, Wheaton (2015) noted the significance of "emerging, high-risk, and lifestyle sports" as a crucial perspective in contemporary sport sociology. These activities blend elements of art, play, and games, crossing boundaries that redefine conventional sporting norms. In an in-depth analysis of transnational mobilities, Thorpe (2014) posited that action sports diverge from traditional sports by their relationship to national identity, presenting an important opportunity to examine emerging trends in the globalization of sports and youth culture. Additionally, in 2017, Thorpe articulated a research agenda concerning action sports, social media, and emerging technologies. Climbers' activities often include increased risk exposure, technical climbing abilities, extended expedition lengths and sports competition at the Olympic games (Linxweiler & Maude, 2017). The growing use of smartphones in everyday life may drastically change the way people interact with their environments (Pohl, 2006). While smartphone use in natural settings may

provide numerous benefits to users, negative consequences may also exist, with the severity of these consequences increasing in extreme environments (Ewert & Shultis, 1999; Martin, 2017; Martin & Blackwell, 2016; Pohl, 2006).

Filo et al. (2015) described social media as innovative technologies that enable interactivity and co-creation, allowing organizations (such as teams, governing bodies, agencies, and media groups) and individuals (including consumers, athletes, and journalists) to develop and share user-generated content. In recent years, a significant trend has emerged on social networking sites (S.N.S.s). As image-based platforms like Instagram gain popularity, users are increasingly communicating and presenting themselves by sharing photographs they take of themselves, commonly known as "selfies" (Kim et al., 2016). As selfies become increasingly popular as a unique form of self-presentation across various S.N.S.s, an intriguing question emerges: what motivates people to post selfies on these platforms? To explore this issue, other scholars also examined the factors of selfie-posting behavior on S.N.S.s by applying and extending Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). Kim et al. (2016) proposed and tested a conceptual model based on the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) incorporating narcissism as an additional variable. Results indicate that attitude, subjective norm, perceived behavioral control, and narcissism significantly influence the intention to post selfies on social networking sites. This approach relates to our study, which utilized TPB to investigate related phenomena among a specific population, such as self-identified climbers, emphasizing the differences between male and female athletes. In a study discussing social media use among female athletes, Toffoletti and Thorpe (2018) noted that among drastic under-representation of female athletes in traditional media, social media provides a platform that can bridge this gap and reshape conventional gender identities in sports.

Reviewing additional scholarly literature on the use of social media in sport, we identify a considerable connection with the dramaturgical perspective of Erwin Goffman. Goffman's performative self (1959) is increasingly used among scholars to explain variations in online participation. Goffman's dramaturgical approach uses a theatrical metaphor to explain how individuals present an "idealized" version of themselves rather than an authentic one. This approach views life as a stage where people perform for an audience. Goffman defined a performance as an individual's activity in front of observers, which in turn has some impact on that audience. This ongoing presence allows individuals to adjust their behavior and manage impressions by selectively revealing details. Drawing on this concept, Hogan (2010) suggested dividing self-presentation into two types: performances in synchronous "situations" and artifacts in asynchronous "exhibitions". Goffman's dramaturgical approach, which includes the ideas of front and backstage, is primarily concerned with situations. In contrast, social media often combine exhibitions (like status updates and photo sets) with situational activities (like chatting). Bullingham and Vasconcelos (2013) concluded that Goffman's original framework is highly valuable for understanding identity and self-presentation through interaction in the online world. Additionally, the online environment, with its advanced capabilities for self-editing, can provide opportunities to further develop and refine Goffman's framework.

Applied to our case, we associate the factors that predict the social media use among climbers, with the front stage and backstage given by Goffman. Elaborated further in the discussion section, this approach resonates with the attitude, the subjective norm, and the behavioral control, suggested with the TPB and examined in this study, also linked to the work of Kim et al. (2016), cited earlier. Little is currently known about the factors driving the use of social media by climbers, especially in high-risk environments. The purpose of this study was to explore to what extent factors such as intention, attitude and subjective norm, may influence social media engagement among climbers from diverse background and experience. Based on the presented literature, the following hypotheses got tested (Graph 1):

H_1: Attitude will be a significant predictor of climbers' intentions to use social media for self-promotion.

H_2: Perceived behavioral control will be a significant predictor of climbers' intentions to use social media for self-promotion.

H_3: Subjective norm will be a significant predictor of climber' intentions to use social media for self-promotion.

H_4: Social media use will be a significant predictor of climber' attitude to use social media for self-promotion.

H_5: Social media use will be a significant predictor of climber' behavior to use social media for self-promotion.

H_6: Social media will be a significant predictor of climber' subjective norm to use social media for self-promotion.

H_7: Intention will be a significant predictor of climbers' direct use of self-promotion.

With that, these two research questions were developed:

Research question 1: To what extent do attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control predict the intention to use social media for self-promotion among climbers?

Research question 2: How do the intentions to use social media for self-promotion differ between female and male climbers?

Graph 1. *Proposed model*
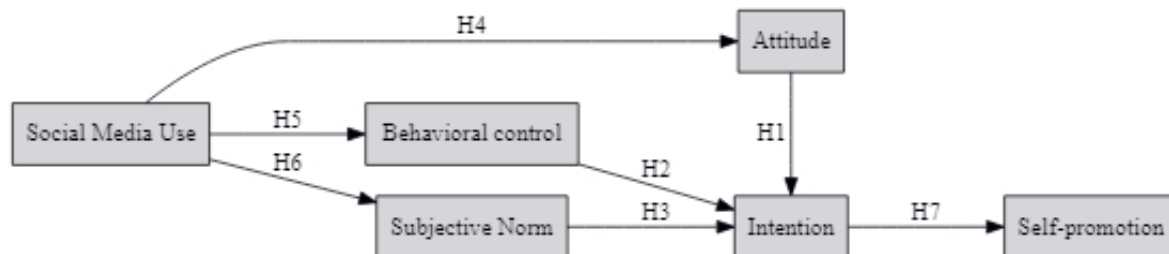
METHODS

Examinee sample

A correlational research design was used in this study to examine the relationship between the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) variables and variables related to the use of social media and self-promotion within the climbing community. A sample of 142 (N=142) climbers from 21 different countries participated in this study via an online survey after I.R.B. approval was obtained. A purposeful and convenient sampling technique was obtained, and the researchers used email, social media groups and local climbing gyms to contact directly those members of the climbing community who were interested in the study. The only requirement to participate in the voluntary online anonymous survey was that the participant must be over 18 and can be identified as a climber. It is important to note that Google Form only registered fully completed surveys, hence we do not have any information as to how many participants started completing the survey. However, there was a conscious effort to ensure that survey bias was prevented by utilizing existing scales that were already validated and reliable. This minimized the possibility that bias would occur during the collection of data during the survey.

Measuring instruments

There are many climbers who use social media platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok, where they appear as passive consumers of content. They scroll through their News feeds and follow other climbing friends' discussions or follow popular climbing destinations or professional climbers' journeys, or they follow the discussions of their climbing friends. Although social media offers the promise of expanding horizons for climbers, there is a growing sense of apprehension and a question about what drives climbers to post and share stories about their adventures, wherever they may be and what they may be doing. The variables used in this study were derived from previous literature and were adapted from six variables used in previous studies. Namely, Social Media Use Scale, Self-promotion Scale, and Theory of Planned Behavior Scale, which had variables such as Subjective Norm, Perceived Behavior Control, and Attitude. This survey began with a brief description of the demographic characteristics of climbers in the first part, information about their social media usage adapted from Taylor (2020) and Krasnova et al. (2013) in the second part, followed by the Self-promotion scale (Taylor, 2020), and Theory of Planned Behavior scale (Ajzen, 1991; 2013).

Theory of Planned Behavior. According to Ajzen (1991; 2013), the theory of planned behavior (TPB) may prove to be a useful theoretical framework for analyzing the factors that drive climbers' intentions to use social media to promote themselves (Ajzen, 1991; 2013). An individual's behavioral intention can be explained by looking at their attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control over a specific behavior (Ajzen, 1991; 2013) in this case, using social media for the purpose of self-promotion. There were 15 items on the scale that were based on a 5-point Likert scale, resulting in four different factors based on the results of this study: Attitude (3 items), Subjective Norm (6 items), Perceived Behavioral Control (4 items), and the final Behavior Intention (3 items). Examples of questions: "Following highly skilled climbers on social media is important to me," "Most people support my social media posts and want me to post more," and "Using social media during a climbing trip/project will help me stay connected".

Self-promotion Scale. Self-promotion is a strategy that individuals use to express a positive image of themselves by emphasizing their own strengths, contributions, and accomplishments in relation to others, in this case, climbers (Den Hartog et al., 2020). To conduct this study, we build on existing items, originating from Taylor's study (2020) as the basis of our questionnaire. A 5-item scale was used to measure this phenomenon. An example of a question was: "I want to make people aware of my accomplishments" on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree".

Social Media Usage. The instrument that was used in this study was the six-item Social Media Usage scale developed by Taylor (2020) on a 5-point Likert scale. As part of the questionnaire, the participants were asked: "On social media, how often do you: (1) ...look through your News Feed; (2) ...check out the conversations your friends are having; (3) ...browse the profiles of others". These questions were primarily inspired by the Koroleva et al. (2010) study.

Statistical analysis

This study used both multiple regression and correlation analyses in order to identify which predictors have the greatest impact on behavior intention, self-promotion and social media use among climbers around the globe after Cronbach alpha was calculated and checked using SPSS 27 and Jamovi 2.3.16. as the statistical software. To determine climbers' intention to promote themselves via social media as well as the influence of subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, and attitude on their willingness to use social media for self-promotion, an independent sample t-test was conducted to determine gender differences, as well as differences between sponsored and non-sponsored climbers and their intention for self-promotion and what drives that decision the most. To test the hypotheses a Path analysis method was used to analyze the data to determine the model fit statistics and parameter estimates based on all variables and constructs from the study's model. To perform this task, a number of indicators were used: Chi-square, which indicates that a value less than three indicates a good fit.

RESULTS

Descriptive statistics and correlation

For the statistical interpretation of the participants in this study, descriptive analysis was first used to understand the shape of data and some background information, before conducting hypothesis testing. In total, 142 climbers with diverse climbing experience were included - 54 males, 82 females and 6 from a diverse gender population, such as queer and transgender. The average age of the participants was M=36.3 (SD=10.3), where the youngest climber was 18 years old and the oldest 73 years old. It was confirmed by every climber who participated in this study that social media is one of their forms of expression, and communication. No doubt that sponsorship plays a large role in social media today, especially for the purpose of promotion, but only 10.6 percent of the respondents in this study reported having some kind of sponsorship for their climbing activities (Table 1). In the survey, most respondents identified themselves as intermediate (41.5%) and advanced climbers (33.1%), whereas 18.3 percent stated that they are at the beginner level with 7 percent stating that they are at the professional level.

Table 1. *Descriptive information*

Features		Population	Proportion (%)
Gender	Female	82	57.7
	Male	54	38
	Other	6	4.3
Climbing level	Beginner	26	18.3
	Intermediate	59	41.5
	Advanced	47	33.1
	Professional	10	7
Sponsorship	No	127	89.4
	Yes	15	10.6

Ten most popular social media applications were listed in the survey (Instagram, Facebook, X, Viber, Tik-Tok, Be Real, WhatsApp, Snapchat, and LinkedIn), and out of the ten most popular social media applications, 92.3 percentage of climbers referred to Instagram as their primary application, followed by Facebook and X as their secondary applications. One of the major factors that determine the success of a social media campaign is the number of followers that the climbers have on the social media platforms. There are two most common groups for the number of followers for this study, 101-1000 (47.1%) and 1001-5000 (35.7%).

Table 2. *Descriptive Statistics for Direct Measure*

	N	Mean (S.D.)	Min	Max	Cronbach α of observed variables
Intention	142	3.69 (.93)	1.00	5.00	.84
Attitude	142	3.73 (.75)	1.00	5.00	.70
Behavioral Control	142	3.07 (1.0)	1.00	5.00	.86
Subjective Norm	142	3.29 (.85)	1.00	5.00	.81
Social Media Usage	142	3.30 (.63)	1.00	5.00	.75
Self-Promotion	142	3.31 (.88)	1.00	5.00	.85

This study (Table 2) utilized a five-point Likert scale in which 1 is the minimum level (strongly disagree) and 5 is the maximum level (strongly agree) of statements. Furthermore, it was found that the reliability coefficient for this study was in a range of $\alpha = .70$ to $\alpha = .86$. The lowest value of $\alpha = .70$ was for the attitude, and the highest value $\alpha = .86$ for the perceived behavior control. With that we ensured internal reliability, even .70 was at the borderline of acceptance.

Table 3. *Relationship between vectors and Intention*

|	1	2	3	4	5
Intention					
Attitude	.548**				
Perceived Behavior Control	.614**	.433**			
Subjective Norm	.674**	.462**	.808**		
Social Media Usage	.509**	.481**	.369**	.396**	
Self-Promotion	.567**	.377**	.636**	.661**	.524**

** = p < .005

An analysis of Pearson's product-moment correlations was performed to determine whether there were significant relationships between all the directly measured variables and their correlations. All variables used in this study had a positive relationship between each other. Yet, the subjective norms and perceived behavioral control had

the highest statistically significant positive relationships ($r = .880$, $p = .005$) while attitude and self-promotion had the smallest statistically significant positive relationships ($r = 3.77$, $p = .005$) (Table 3).

Proposed Hypothesized Model

Graph 2. *Proposed Model Diagram*
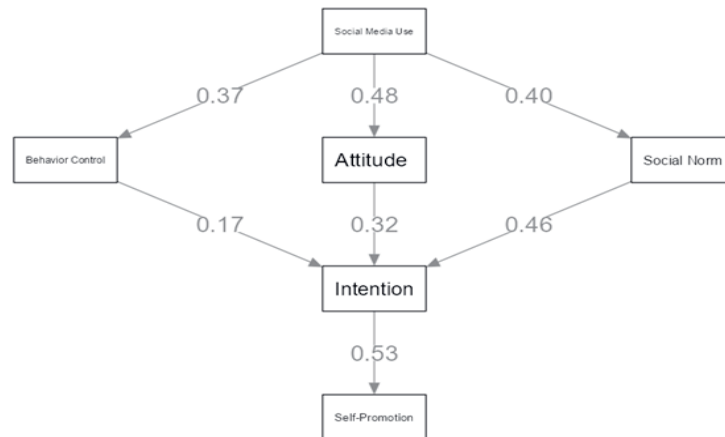
Path analysis showed that all paths were positive and statistically significant. The path coefficient from intention to self-promotion had the strongest standardized regression weight of .531. The model's chi-square, $\chi^2(8, 15) = 461$, $p < .005$. The intention was explained with 29% of variation in self-promotion (Graph 2, Table 4).

Table 4. *Analysis of hypotheses*

Hypothesis – Relation path	β	P-value
H1: Attitude → Intention	.317	.000***
H2: Behavior Control → Intention	.166	.000***
H3: Subjective Norm → Intention	.461	.000***
H4: Social media → Attitude	.481	.000***
H5: Social media → Behavior Control	.369	.000***
H6: Social media → Subjective Norm	.396	.000***
H7: Intention → Self Promotion	.531	.000***

=p>0.05; *=p <0.05; **p<0.01; ***=p<0.001

An independent t-test was conducted to compare self-promotion and intention to use among different genders. The mean value for climbers identifying as female ($M = 4.04$, $SD = 0.82$) was significantly higher than for climbers identifying as male ($M = 3.65$, $SD = 1.07$) for intention, $t(92) = -2.29$, $p = .02$. Due to the very small number of climbers identifying as queer, transgender and other, compared to males and females, these groups were removed from the analysis. Furthermore, the study found statistically significant differences between climbers with sponsorship for their climbing activities and those without any financial, equipment, or similar support. For climbers with sponsorship, self-promotion, intention, attitude, behavioral control, and subjective norms were more important than for those without sponsorship. Specifically, the intention for self-promotion among sponsored climbers ($M = 4.49$, $SD = 0.91$) was significantly higher compared to non-sponsored climbers ($M = 3.82$, $SD = 0.94$), $t(17.3) = -2.56$, $p = 0.02$. Additionally, the subjective norm for sponsored climbers ($M = 4.12$, $SD = 0.94$) was significantly higher than that of non-sponsored climbers ($M = 3.20$, $SD = 0.79$), $t(16.4) = -3.64$, $p = 0.001$. In other words, for sponsored climbers, perceptions of what others think and how other climbers behave are more influential compared to those without sponsorship. This indicates that social expectations and the actions of peers play a greater role in shaping the attitudes and intentions of climbers with sponsorship.

DISCUSSION

In his substantive essay on social media use, Erland (2022) stated: "If you do not exist online, you do not exist". From a climbing perspective, this can be summed up as: "If you did not post about your climb on social media, it is as if the climb never happened". Even if climbing activities can take place in an isolated and high-risk environment, an increasing number of climbers share their activities and daily lives on social media. The reasons vary, so the purpose of this study was to examine the factors that predict climbers' worldwide intention to use social media for self-promotion. The results showed a positive relationship among all factors in this study; subjective norms and perceived behavioral control had the highest statistically significant positive relationships ($r = .880$, $p = .005$). Furthermore, the results suggested that climbers' intention to use social media for self-promotion was explained by their attitudes, behavior control and subjective norms. The path coefficient from intention to self-promotion had the strongest standardized regression weight of .531. With that, we investigated research question 1: "To what extent do attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control predict the intention to use social media for self-promotion among climbers?"

To address the second research question, "How do the intentions to use social media for self-promotion differ between female and male climbers?" this study examined the differences in social media self-promotion intentions among genders. The findings revealed a significant difference between female and male climbers. Specifically, female climbers had significantly higher intentions to use social media for self-promotion ($M = 4.04$, $SD = 0.82$) compared to male climbers ($M = 3.65$, $SD = 1.07$), $t (92) = -2.29$, $p = 0.02$. This indicates that gender plays a notable role in the intention to engage in self-promotion on social media, with female climbers showing a greater propensity towards this behavior. These findings resonate with the presented studies addressing the underrepresentation of female athletes in traditional media outlets, and the shift brought by social media, that can potentially bridge that gap and challenge conventional gender identities in sport (Toffoletti & Thorpe, 2018).

Applied to our case, we associate the factors that predict the social media use among climbers, with the front stage and backstage given by Goffman. This can be explained by adding filters and representing the best self on social media, aiming to meet expectations from the audience. On the other hand, the practical implications of this study highlight the needs among climbers. For instance, introducing opportunities like Name, Image, and Likeness (NIL) rights for climbers, like those available to college athletes in the U.S., could be beneficial. Furthermore, compared to professional athletes who receive extensive educational support on effectively using social media for self-promotion, climbers would greatly benefit from similar opportunities. Given the evident intention among climbers to use social media for self-promotion in the future, providing them with targeted educational resources is essential. Since female climbers had a higher intention to use social media for self-promotion, many outdoor industries can recognize and use that for their marketing purposes.

Limitation and Recommendation

First, this study examined gender differences, but a primary limitation was the lack of diversity, particularly among populations identifying as queer, transgender, and other gender identities. Secondly, during this study we discovered that some countries do not allow access to certain social media platforms we used as primary tools, such as Instagram. As a result, climbers from these countries excluded themself from the study. Third, due to the short time of data collection, the sample size was not big enough for the S.E.M. analysis, planned at the beginning.

Based on this study, future research could benefit from a mix methods design conducting in-depth interviews to better understand gender differences related to their ability. Additionally, since climbing has become a more popular competitive sport, it would be valuable to explore the differences in self-promotion strategies between competitive climbers and recreational climbers. Investigating these aspects could provide a more comprehensive understanding of how various factors influence self-promotion in the climbing community.

CONCLUSION

Aiming to investigate the factors that predict climbers' intentions to use social media for self-promotion, it was discovered that there is a significant positive correlation between all these factors. Additionally, results sug-

gested that climbers' intention to use social media for self-promotion was explained by their attitudes, behavior control, and subjective norms. The findings also revealed that female climbers have a higher intention to use social media for self-promotion compared to male climbers. Applying Goffman's front stage and backstage concepts involves analyzing how climbers present themselves on social media in different contexts and motivations behind these presentations. If we consider the front stage to consist of public posts, audience engagement, sponsorship and influence, then the backstage will include the preparation of the content, private interactions, and performance. Or the front stage examines the behaviors that climbers use to create a specific impression on their audience, while the backstage will delve into behaviors and preparations that are hidden from the public. However, in that case an emerging question that requires further examination, is to situate the actual act of climbing within Goffman's stage. Further investigation could be beneficial to understand the nuances not only beyond the binary gender view, but also among climbers with different skill levels of performance in the sport, which will not necessarily mean that better climbers are more famous than others, unless they are sponsored.

The scientific significance of the study, "More Likes, More Climbing" lies in its contributions to the fields of both sports management and marketing. The study's application of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) within the context of niche sports like climbing offers valuable insights into how factors such as intention, attitude and subjective norm, may influence social media use among athletes. Additionally, contribution is made through complex methodology, incorporating existing and adapted scales together with a blend of theoretical perspectives. The findings, emphasizing gender differences in social media use, contribute to understanding the dynamics of the representation and participation of athletes. From a marketing perspective, the examination of climbers' use of social media platforms can inform digital marketing strategies and potentially, create branding endorsements and sponsorship opportunities. This leads to nuanced understanding of how social media can reshape motivation and visibility within niche sports communities. Overall, the research contributes to academic discourse by analyzing how social media impact cultural norms and values of the broader climbing communities. By examining these areas, the study provides a valuable framework for future research in sports sociology, digital marketing, and the role of social media in shaping contemporary athletic identities. Dealing with a less explored topic in a practical sense, this study can be beneficial for the increasing climbing population and contribute to the popularization of this sport.

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