

Text as Expressive Content on Instagram: A Case Study of @djokernole and the Role of Captions in Audience Engagement

Nada Mihailović
Academy of Technical and Art Applied
Studies
School of Electrical and Computer
Engineering
Belgrade, Serbia
nadam@viser.edu.rs

Milica Jevremović
Information Technology School
Belgrade, Serbia
milica.jevremovic@its.edu.rs

Abstract— This paper analyzes the expressive role of text on Instagram through a case study of the profile @djokernole, representing global tennis champion Novak Djokovic. It focuses on three key dimensions: caption construction, thematic composition of posts (professional, family, and sponsored), and performance metrics such as engagement rate, follower growth, and comment activity. The study situates these findings within the broader evolution of Instagram from a photo-sharing platform to a global marketing ecosystem. It highlights how Djokovic effectively balances personal authenticity with professional branding, maintaining digital relevance among diverse audiences. Particular emphasis is placed on the role of captions as more than mere annotations — they function as carriers of narrative, emotion, and cultural resonance. Through this profile, the paper illustrates how even high-profile public figures must navigate the delicate interplay of audience expectations, sponsorship obligations, and content cadence to sustain a meaningful digital presence.

Keywords— Instagram, @djokernole, Novak Djokovic, @cristiano, Cristiano Ronaldo, captions, digital marketing, audience engagement, paid partnership, Instagram formats, social media communication

I. INTRODUCTION

Multimedia content in the form of photographs, videos, live streams, infographics, and audio represents the hallmark of Instagram, widely recognized by the general public. This paper analyzes the significance and formats of textual content that complement visual elements. Without symbolic, textual expression and content, the reach and longevity of posts (including their archiving) would be limited or even unattainable.

Instagram, as a social media platform, emerged in 2010. The founders' vision was to bring together photography enthusiasts who would publish, share, or evaluate posted content. This development coincided with the rise of numerous social networks and media platforms catering to diverse interests across all generations.

A pivotal event in Instagram's development occurred in 2012 when Facebook acquired the platform, thereby expanding its presence in the social media market. By 2014, users were provided with new tools for content optimization and analytics [1]. The new owner introduced innovative post

formats. Companies view social media as a space to engage their communities, strategically leveraging these platforms to enhance brand visibility and directly connect with their target audiences.

In addition to companies, globally recognized public figures identify Instagram as an opportunity for self-promotion and the promotion of brands closely associated with their activities (as influencers). Under the umbrella of the Instagram platform, a new form of digital marketing known as "paid partnerships" has emerged [2].

For the purposes of broader contextual analysis, the Instagram account @cristiano, owned by Portuguese footballer Cristiano Ronaldo, has been included as a reference point due to its sustained global prominence both on the platform itself and within the field of digital marketing [3].

Over an extended period, @cristiano has consistently held the leading position in terms of follower count on Instagram. According to the most recent data, the account is followed by 661.3 million users, a figure that exceeds the populations of entire continents such as North America (617 million), South America (450 million), and Australia (45 million) [4].

Cristiano Ronaldo represents a global phenomenon whose digital presence is monetized at an estimated \$1.5 to \$2 million per month, positioning him as the highest-paid digital influencer currently active. While the exact revenue generated through sponsored content remains speculative, marketing agencies often refer to the "Ronaldo Effect" as shorthand for the measurable commercial impact achieved by brands that utilize his account for promotional purposes [5].

The account functions as a comprehensive media outlet rather than a conventional personal profile. Individual posts generate an average of 7.2 million likes and 77.8 thousand comments, with an engagement rate of 1.09%, classified as "Good" relative to comparable high-profile accounts. With a total of 3,916 posts and a follower-to-following ratio of 1,093,129, the account exhibits an exceptionally high degree of authority within the platform's ecosystem [6].

Ronaldo employs multiple Instagram formats, with notable emphasis on Reels and Stories. The content strategy comprises a diverse mix of themes, including family

moments, training footage, sponsored collaborations, and motivational messaging, a deliberate approach that fosters perceived intimacy with his audience while simultaneously maintaining global brand visibility [7].

This paper presents a case study analyzing engagement on the Instagram profile @djokernole. The profile @cristiano is used as a key reference point, given its leading position on Instagram in terms of follower count, carefully crafted posts, strategic partnerships and high audience engagement.

II. BACKGROUND

As an increasing number of users gather on a single online platform, this serves as a signal for marketing teams to capitalize on such opportunities to promote their products, services, or ideas. Marketing activities are conducted in spaces where potential customers, users, and followers congregate [8].

Over its fifteen-year existence, the platform's functionalities have continuously expanded:

- *Feed Posts.* Users can add one or more photographs formatted for publication in landscape orientation. A single video in landscape format, up to 60 seconds in duration, can be accompanied by a soundtrack. The Carousel is an extended feed format that allows the publication of two or more (up to 10) thematically related photographs or a combination of photographs and videos within a single post. On professional profiles, each segment of a Carousel post can include a description beneath the image, such as product name, model, features, price, hashtags, and mentions. This format is useful for showcasing image series, tutorials, or stories.
- *Videos.* Video formats in the feed can last up to 60 seconds and can be published in various aspect ratios.
- *Instagram Stories.* These are short-lived posts that disappear after 24 hours, enabling the sharing of videos, photographs, GIFs, and text. Stories can include interactive elements such as polls, questions, stickers, links, hashtags, mentions (@mentions), locations, music, and other enhancements. They are displayed in full-screen portrait orientation, ensuring maximum visibility. Owners can save Stories to their archive and reactivate them on the platform later.
- *Instagram Reels.* Full-screen videos in portrait orientation, lasting up to 90 seconds. This highly popular format can integrate video segments, photographs, diagrams, audio, and digital visual and sound effects. Similar to TikTok content, Reels appear in the feed section and include space for textual content and SEO optimization. They are ideal for attracting younger audiences.
- *Instagram Shopping.* This feature enables brands to create a digital product catalog that users can browse and purchase directly on the platform without leaving the application. Business users link their Instagram account to their Facebook business account. Products are added to a Facebook catalog, which is then connected to Instagram Shop. Posts allow users to tag

products, enabling direct purchases from images. Purchases can be completed on Instagram or redirected to the brand's external website. The Instagram Shop section supports organic product searches, and paid advertising (sponsorships) can further boost sales. This format appears in several key sections:

- *Feed Posts:* Brands can tag products in posts, similar to tagging people.
- *Instagram Stories:* Products can be showcased with "Swipe Up" options or purchase tags.
- *Instagram Live:* This feature enables live streaming on Instagram, ideal for real-time audience interaction, Q&A sessions, product presentations, interviews, and more. The video is displayed in full-screen portrait orientation. Viewers can actively participate in the live stream. Live broadcasts should be announced via a feed post a day in advance to inform the target audience promptly. Live streams typically last from a few minutes to an hour, depending on audience engagement.
- *Instagram Guides:* Guides allow professional users to create curated content collections, such as recommendations, tutorials, or lists. Feed posts, products, or locations can be linked to create cohesive narratives.
- *IGTV:* Enables the sharing of video content longer than 60 seconds, making it suitable for tutorials, interviews, product presentations, and other extended formats. Professional users utilize it for detailed explanations or demonstrations. However, due to fast-paced lifestyles, longer videos are often not watched to completion. Therefore, careful consideration of content length and adaptation to the average user is essential. IGTV is now integrated into the feed section, enhancing content accessibility and visibility.

Instagram increased the importance of the Caption in November 2020 when it enabled in-app and Explore section search based on descriptive text. Before this, searches were only possible using hashtags and mentions. The exposure algorithm for posts and profiles was modified. A well-optimized Caption, follower comments longer than four characters, spontaneous discussion creation, and the sharing of posts both within and outside the platform contribute to greater visibility and reach for posts and profiles [9].

Each Instagram format serves a specific purpose and offers unique ways to engage audiences.

III. METHODOLOGY

The subject of this research is the analysis of textual expression — within the Captions section, including hashtags and mentions — as well as user comments, content sharing, participation in discussions, use of emojis, and other audience activities on the influencer Instagram profile @djokernole. The aim is to understand how quality multimedia content, reinforced by textual and interactive elements, enhances the visibility and reach of posts, thereby fulfilling digital marketing objectives.

Primary data sources are the Instagram profiles @djokernole and @cristiano.

The case study method is chosen as the central applied scientific approach in this research, enabling both quantitative and qualitative analysis of posts within a defined time frame [10]. As a detailed and in-depth exploration of a specific situation (profile) in the real or virtual world, the case study is a well-established method in social sciences, management, marketing, and related fields - offering insights into complex phenomena and supporting the development of strategies for addressing them.

As outlined, Instagram comprises various formats designed for user engagement. This research focuses on posts in the Feeds and Reels formats, which remain accessible over time and can be retrieved via search using hashtags and words in the Captions section. Formats such as Story and Instagram Live are excluded due to their ephemeral nature.

The influencer profile of Novak Djokovic presents three major post categories - personal moments from tournaments and training (predominant), family-oriented posts, and sponsored partnerships.

Table 2 presents parameters from two selected posts, one representing family content and the other a paid partnership. For this segment, a comparative method is employed — deemed appropriate given the similarity in format, authorship, and timing. In the study's conclusion, a brief comparative analysis is also conducted between profiles @djokernole and @cristiano.

A. Data Coding and Validation

Data coding and validation were performed using tools from the AI-based HypeAuditor platform, designed for influencer campaign analysis and management, with support for multi-channel networks such as Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, Twitch, and X.

Key functionalities of the utilized HypeAuditor tool include discovery of influencers tailored to campaign needs, with access to over 200 million profiles searchable by demographics, audience quality, location, and interests and Analysis of over 35 Instagram-specific metrics, including:

- Engagement rate calculation.
- Influencer valuation (comparative analysis to identify optimal candidates).
- Content analysis.
- Detection of fake followers and harmful engagement patterns.
- Audience age, quality, location, and account ranking (global/national).
- Monetization potential [11].

The tool enables brands, marketing agencies, and professionals to monitor campaign performance in real time, including ROI, CPE, and daily spend.

Free users must register with a verified corporate email to access account analysis. The profiles @djokernole and @cristiano were examined on Instagram.

HypeAuditor emphasizes performance validation as a key element of its analytic process, including:

- *Audience Quality Score (AQS)*: Measures the authenticity, engagement, and relevance of followers.
- *Engagement Rate*: Assesses actual audience reaction (likes, comments, shares) beyond follower count.
- *Fraud Detection*: Identifies fake followers, bots, and suspicious engagement patterns.
- *Demographic Verification*: Evaluates alignment between audience profile and brand target market (location, age, interests).
- *KPI Analysis*: Tracks campaign metrics including ROI, CPE, and reach and other metrics [12].

Performance outputs are delivered as numerical values, with select metrics also labeled descriptively ("Low," "Good," "Excellent"), allowing analysts to evaluate performance without manually interpreting numerical ranges.

In brief, auditing via HypeAuditor represents not just an overview but a deep validation process - guiding brands and agencies to make informed decisions and avoid collaboration with superficially enhanced influencer accounts.

IV. CASE STUDY: ANALYSIS OF ENGAGEMENT ON THE INSTAGRAM PROFILE @DJOKERNOLE

Novak Djokovic, the most decorated tennis player of all time, effectively leverages social media platforms, actively engaging with users through posts and interactions.

The Instagram profile @djokernole has 15.8 million followers, with Djokovic following 1,717 profiles on the platform. The profile is categorized under sports (tennis, football, basketball, handball) [13].

The @djokernole profile ranks 923rd globally on Instagram and holds the top position among Instagram audiences in Serbia.

Metric Value Interpretations:

- *Engagement*: Audience engagement, expressed through textual content, emojis, likes, or sharing posts with other users on the platform, averages 1.33% (relative to the number of registered followers). According to HypeAuditor, a specialized platform for influencer marketing analytics and management, this is descriptively rated as "good."
- *Follower Growth*: A monthly follower growth rate of 0.79% is relatively low. This data was generated shortly after a tournament's conclusion, during a break before the next major tournament, which may influence the slower growth:
- *Following Trend*: The number of new profiles liked or followed by the @djokernole account (1.7K) may

indicate efforts to boost engagement through reciprocal interactions.

- *Total Posts*: The profile has 1,500 organic posts since its inception, reflecting consistent activity that helps retain existing followers and attract new ones.
- *Average Likes*: The average number of likes per post (210.3K) is considered strong, given the profile’s follower count and its sports-specific focus.
- *Comments Ratio per Post*: The average number of comments per post, in the form of text or emojis, is 228.1, indicating moderate but steady audience interaction.

Table I: Content performance overview on @djokernole's profile [14].

Metric	Value	Interpretation
Engagement Rate	1.33%	Described as “good” for high-follower accounts
Follower Growth (Monthly)	0.79%	Low; measured post-tournament during low activity period
Following Trend	1.7K	Follows new profiles; may indicate reciprocal growth strategy
Total Posts	1.5K	Consistent activity; aids retention and discovery
Average Likes	210.3K	Strong performance relative to follower count and content specificity
Average Comments	228.1	Indicates modest audience interaction per post

Audience age & gender, 38% female, 35-44 y.o [14].

The findings suggest that text on Instagram is not auxiliary but infrastructural: a subtle architecture of audience bonding. Djokovic’s captions, ranging from affirmations like “Thank you for your support”, „Idemoo“ to celebratory emojis or multilingual greetings, foster recognition across a diverse and transnational follower base. His digital identity reflects balance: disciplined and focused in professional contexts, relaxed and emotionally open in personal ones. This supports the claim that captions are not mere annotations—they are vehicles of narrative continuity, affective alignment, and cultural signaling [15].

The @djokernole profile maintains a stable follower base and high authority, but its engagement is moderate, which is typical for mega-celebrities. Posts with a personal tone, such as family moments or behind-the-scenes content from the locker room, often receive better responses than sponsored content [3]. This aligns with the broader observation that authentic, emotionally resonant posts foster stronger connections with the audience, enhancing engagement compared to promotional material.

Organic posts on the @djokernole Instagram profile can be categorized by theme as follows:

- Personal posts (dominated by multimedia content from tennis tournaments or training).

- Family posts.
- Paid sponsorships.

The majority of posts appearing in the Feed and Reels sections from January 1 to March 10, 2025, belong to the personal posts category. In addition to joyful moments from tournament competitions, captured in the heat of battle, this category also includes photos with major global athletes (Messi gifting his jersey to Djokovic; the most decorated quartet of modern-era tennis players on the court in Paris – Djokovic, Nadal, Federer, and Murray).

Family posts and paid partnerships are far less prevalent in Djokovic’s Instagram archive. For a deeper content analysis, a post from January 7 in the form of a Christmas greeting, which by content and audience reactions falls under family posts, was selected, along with a post featuring a portrait photo in front of the Lacoste club in Miami during a tennis tournament (published on March 21).

Table II: Content performance Caption fields and Audience Engagement [14]

Themes	Caption - word count	Caption - emojis	Comments	Likes
Family post	7	3	2,578	560,828
Paid partnership	6	2	1,001	191,381

Both posts were published within a relatively short time period during which no significant fluctuation in the number of profile followers was recorded.

The personal post was published on the day of Orthodox Christmas. Djokovic hails from Serbia, where the majority of believers are of the Orthodox faith, and the @djokernole profile is the top Instagram account among users from Serbia. In the caption section, Djokovic used seven words, crafting a traditional greeting addressed to believers. He added three emojis, one of which was the Christian Prayer emoji. The post was liked by 561,000 followers and received a total of 2,578 comments, varying in length and often combining text and emojis.

The post marked as a paid partnership with Djokovic’s main sponsor, the sports equipment brand Lacoste, is similar in caption content. It consists of six words and includes the Lacoste emoji. This post garnered nearly three times fewer likes compared to the Christmas greeting and has approximately three times fewer comments.

Due to the scope of the research, comment analysis was not conducted, but it could contribute to understanding user engagement in a later phase [16].

An example of emotionally driven content on the analyzed profile is a family Christmas post featuring a family photo (a married couple with their children) accompanied by a short greeting. This caption, though stylistically simple, strongly contributes to building the personal brand by promoting family values, authenticity, and closeness with the audience. The visual tone of the post is complemented by comments with emotional reactions, greetings, and symbols

of support, enhancing the sense of community. Although not commercial in nature, this type of content often achieves high organic reach, fostering emotional audience engagement and strengthening loyalty.

Unlike personal posts, sponsored content on the @djokernole profile, such as the collaboration with the Lacoste brand, clearly communicates a commercial purpose through a carefully crafted caption and professional visual production. The textual part of the post often includes the “Paid partnership with @lacoste mentions and uses a promotional tone. Followers’ comments range from expressions of support to questions about the products, indicating functional interaction between the brand and the audience. Such posts contribute to the monetization of the profile while maintaining a consistent brand identity through the authentic personality of the ambassador.

V. CONCLUSION

In modern digital marketing, sports influencers represent a unique category of public figures. Their presence on social media does not fade with the end of their professional careers. This is evident in the profiles of @djokernole and @cristiano, who remain relevant through carefully crafted posts, strategic partnerships, and high audience engagement even after their peak athletic achievements. While football, as the world’s most popular sport with an estimated 3.5 billion fans, gives Ronaldo an advantage in quantitative reach, tennis, with around one billion followers, offers a different kind of emotional resonance and narrative depth. This difference in sporting context is also reflected in the digital strategies applied by both profiles.

The Instagram profile @djokernole demonstrates that Novak Djokovic, beyond his sporting genius, eloquence, and simplicity in direct communication, possesses a well-developed digital strategy through which he successfully engages with audiences across different generations. Moderate engagement and steady follower growth indicate a profile with pronounced authority, yet also highlight the challenges of sustaining attention in a digitally oversaturated space. Through carefully crafted posts that balance professional achievements, family moments, and sponsored content, Djokovic successfully maintains high visibility and relevance in the digital space. It is precisely in this blend of global reach and personal intimacy that the strength of Djokovic’s Instagram presence lies.

In a broader sense, textual elements, from captions to bio sections, are not mere supplements to visual content—they are critical for crafting narratives and forging connections with audiences. Contemporary users seek not only information but also authenticity. In this regard, Djokovic’s digital identity strikes a balance between a professional image and genuine self-representation, enabling him to remain present in collective consciousness—not only as a tennis champion but also as a relevant figure in contemporary digital culture.

Notably, images with informal framing—such as family gatherings or handwritten notes—outperform polished

sponsored posts, reinforcing the user expectation of authenticity.

The @djokernole profile maintains a stable follower base and high authority, but its engagement is moderate, which is typical for mega-celebrities. Posts with a personal tone, such as family moments or behind-the-scenes content from the locker room, often receive better responses than sponsored content. This aligns with the broader observation that authentic, emotionally resonant posts foster stronger connections with the audience, enhancing engagement compared to promotional material.

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