

MARCH MADNESS 2017 SOCIAL MEDIA BRACKET

Does social engagement with your most passionate fans have an impact on your team's success?

INTRODUCTION

Social media is basically made for sports: it's visual, it encourages engagement and it gives teams a way to truly interact with their most passionate students, fans, and alumni.

We wanted to find out which NCAA Tournament teams are killing it when it comes to social - but not just in terms of audience size. In fact, we found that often times, teams with the biggest follower base had lower engagement rates.

That's why this report delves deeply into what the most engaging NCAA Tournament teams are doing across Facebook, Instagram and Twitter to give you some great ideas and hopefully inspire your next post.



METHODOLOGY

We used Rival IQ to analyze social media posts across all social channels for the 68 NCAA Division 1 teams that qualified to compete for the national championship. We analyzed post data across a four-month period beginning on November 11, 2016 through March 16, 2017, the first day of the tournament.

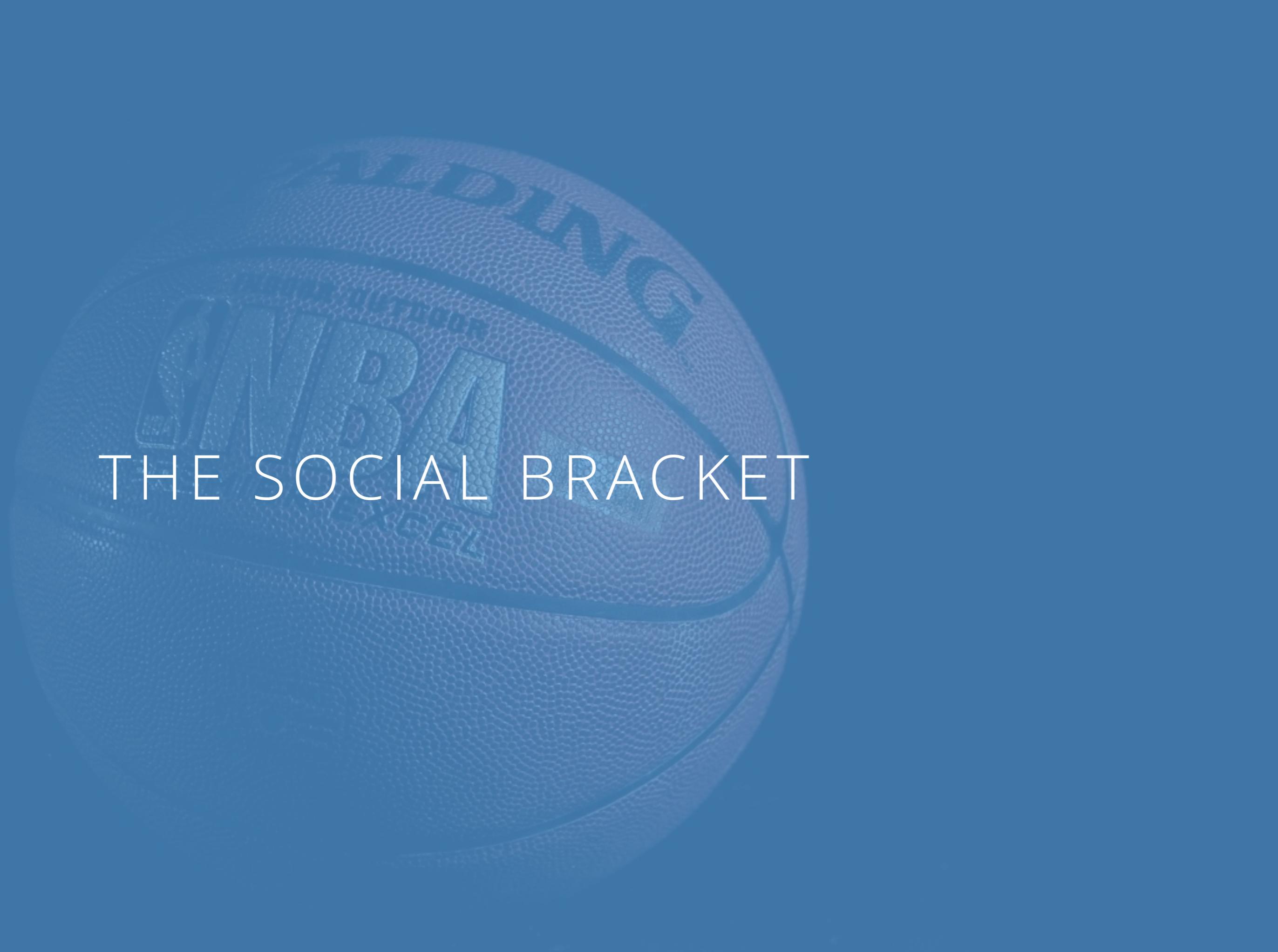
We gathered data using Rival IQ's cross-channel ranking capability, as well as channel-specific rankings for Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. The cross-channel (or overall) ranking is defined by engagement rate across all channels for each university's athletic department (meaning not exclusive to posts related to men's basketball, but all social posts between the indicated dates).

Engagement is defined as measurable interaction on social media posts, including likes, comments, favorites, retweets, shares and reactions. Engagement rate is calculated based on all these interactions divided by total follower count.

We've also provided qualitative analysis with best practice examples from some of the top-performing organizations.

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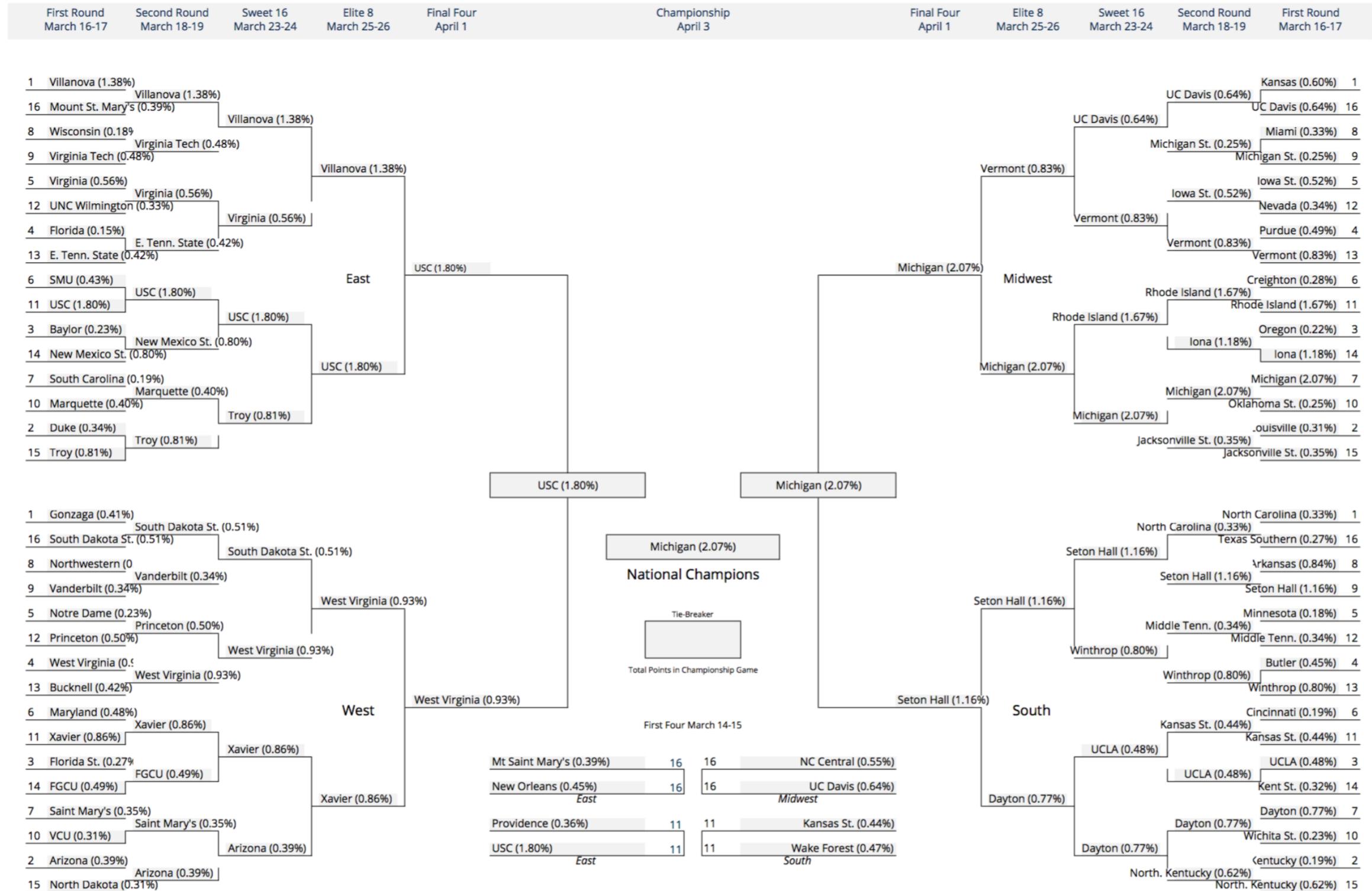




THE SOCIAL BRACKET

MARCH MADNESS SOCIAL MEDIA BRACKET

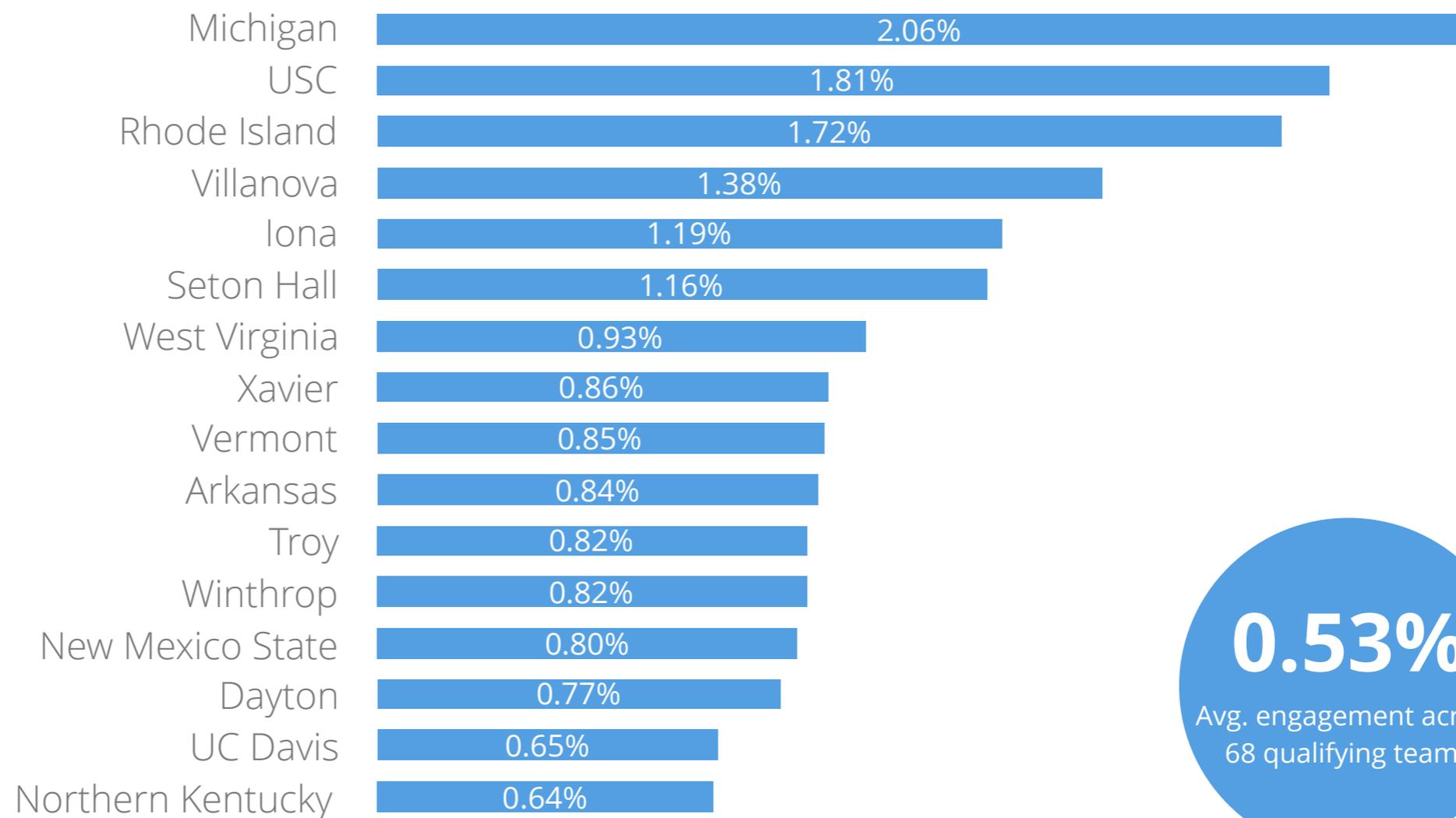
Cross-channel Engagement Rate



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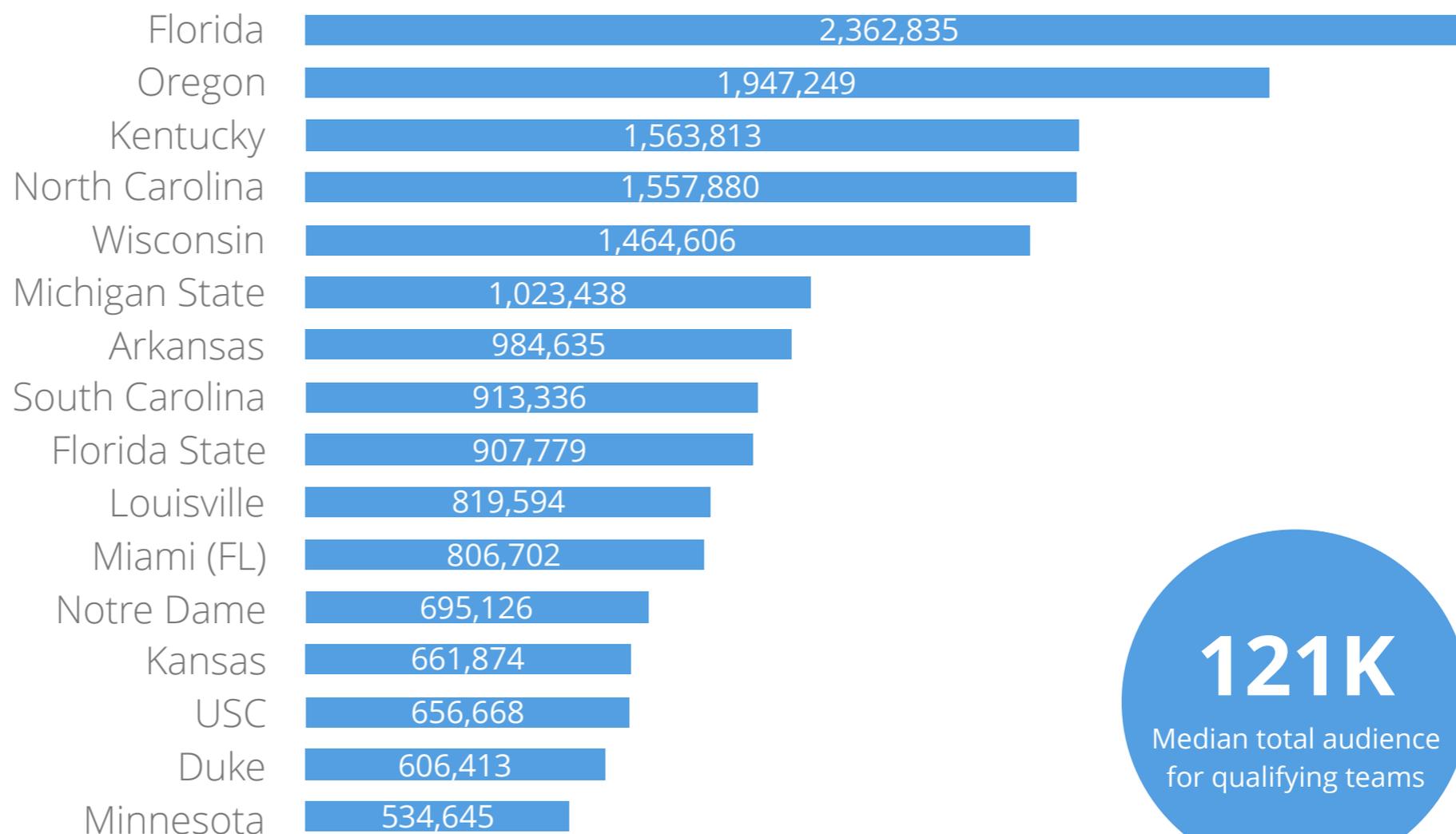
THE TOP 16: OVERALL ENGAGEMENT

Calculated by average engagement rate per post across all social media channels



THE TOP 16: TOTAL AUDIENCE

Calculated by total followers across Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Google+ and Pinterest



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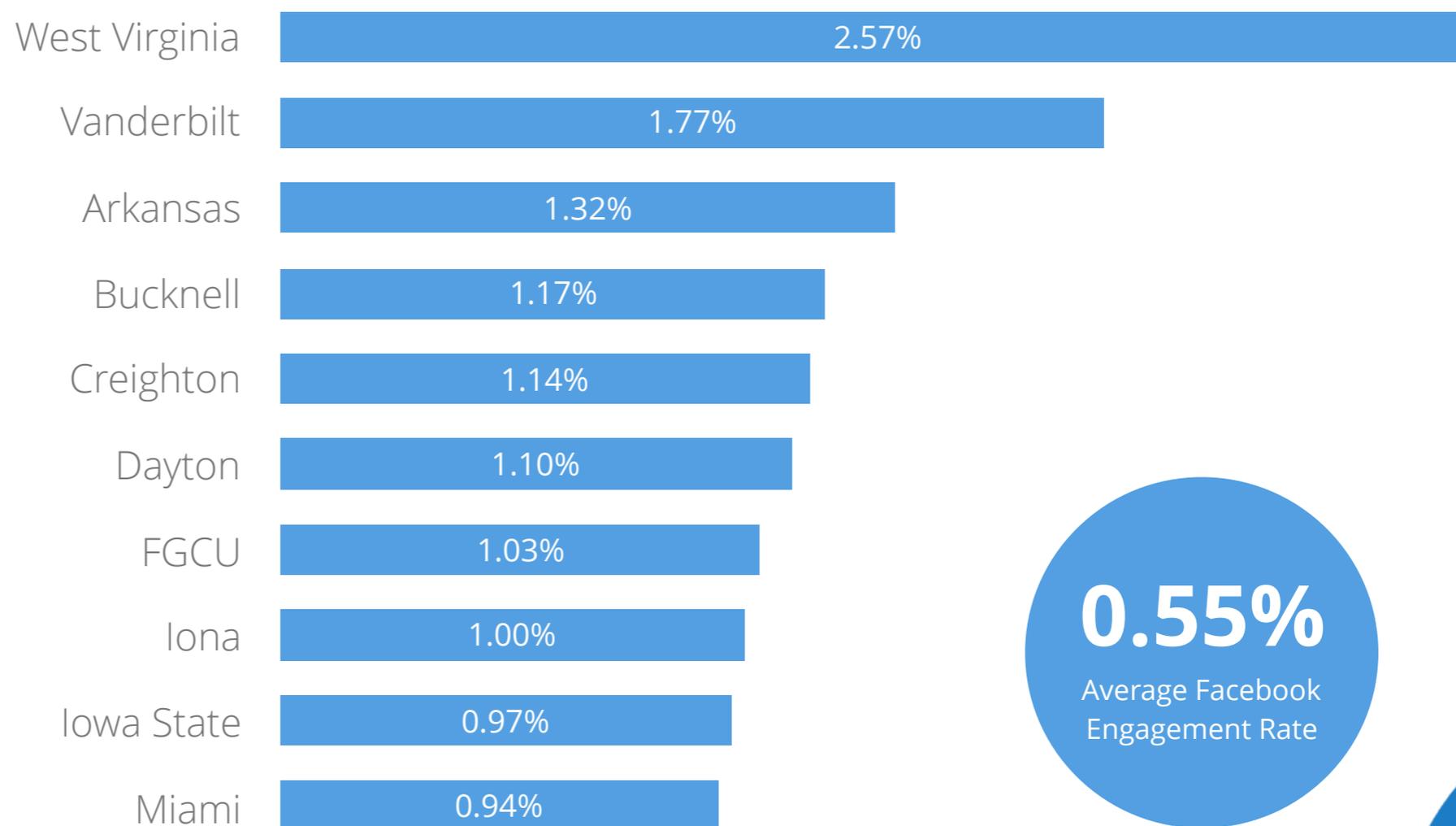
A man in a blue and white striped soccer jersey is kissing a large, reflective silver trophy. The trophy has a circular base with a soccer field scene and the word 'WINNER' visible. The entire image is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter.

TOP TEAMS: FACEBOOK

TOP 10 TEAMS: FACEBOOK ENGAGEMENT



Calculated by average engagement rate per post on Facebook.



0.55%
Average Facebook
Engagement Rate

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FACEBOOK BEST PRACTICES



Share awe-inspiring performances like the Arkansas Razorbacks

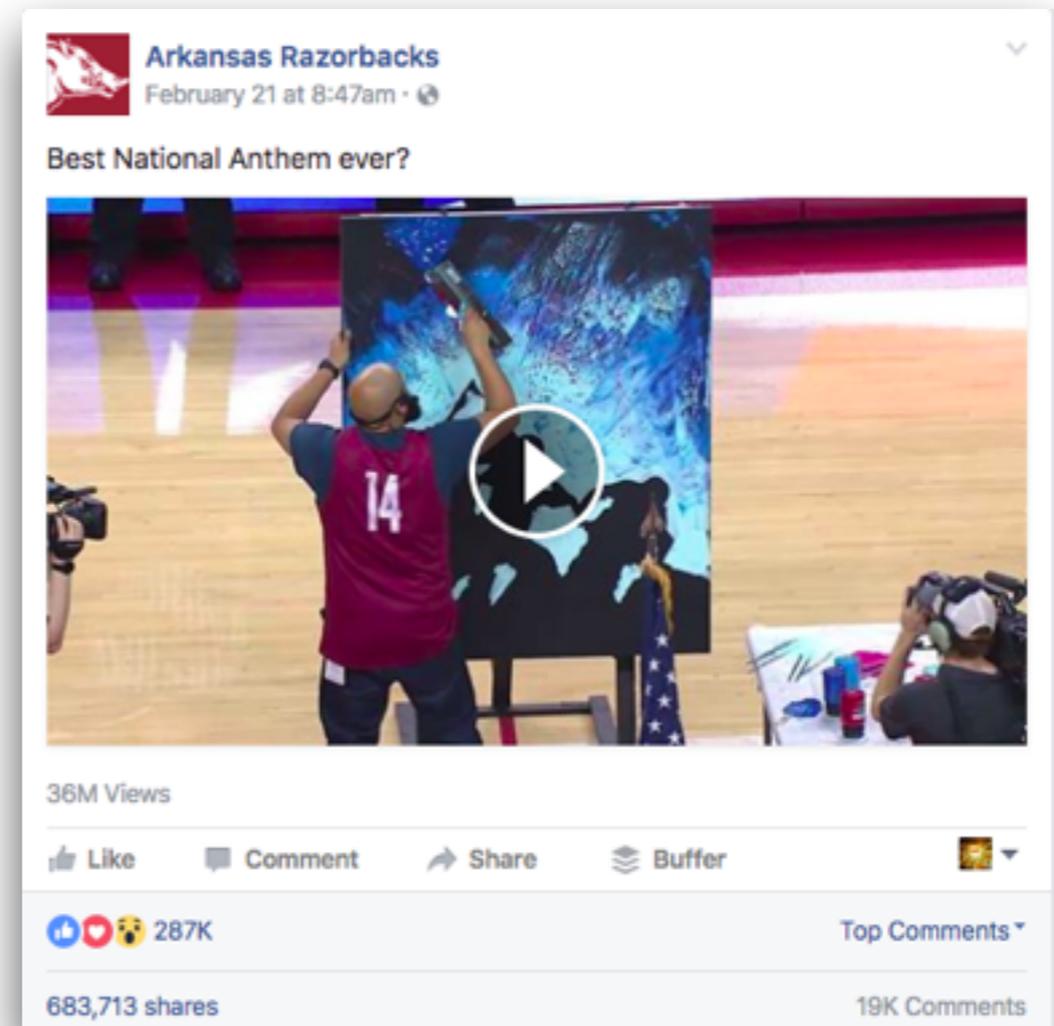
The Arkansas razorback's won Facebook engagement by a mile when they shared what might be the "Best National Anthem ever".

Before the game, artist Joe Everson, sang the national anthem while painting 'the raising of the flag'... upside down! Impressive.

At first we were perplexed - Arkansas experienced a 158% engagement rate on this post, which means for every follower they have, they experience 1.58 likes, comments, and shares! In total, this post received over 957k engagements.

Leveraging Facebook's preference for native video over other media types probably helped them secure this top post and experience higher organic reach.

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FACEBOOK BEST PRACTICES



Recognize history in the making like North Carolina

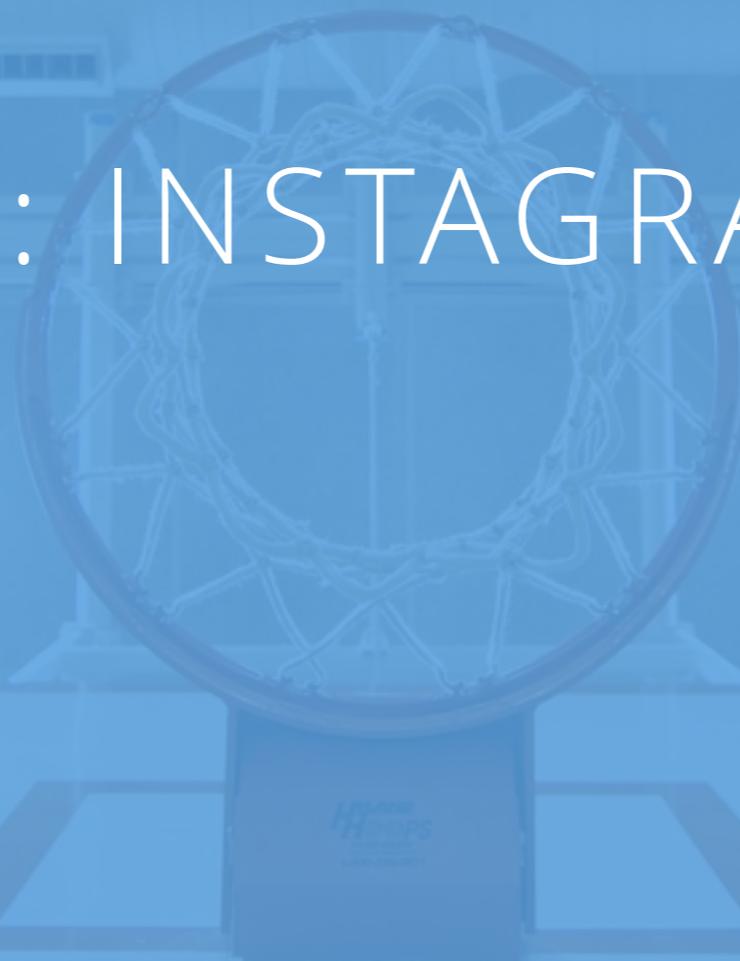
Under coach Roy Williams, the Tar Heels experienced yet another winning season. This year, North Carolina experienced their 800th win under coach Williams, locking his place in the Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame.

North Carolina knew congratulations were in order and with an audience of over 1.5 million fans, took to social media to share the news.

Fans filled the page with over 250 congratulatory comments, 9,000 shares with their networks, and 19,000 reactions.



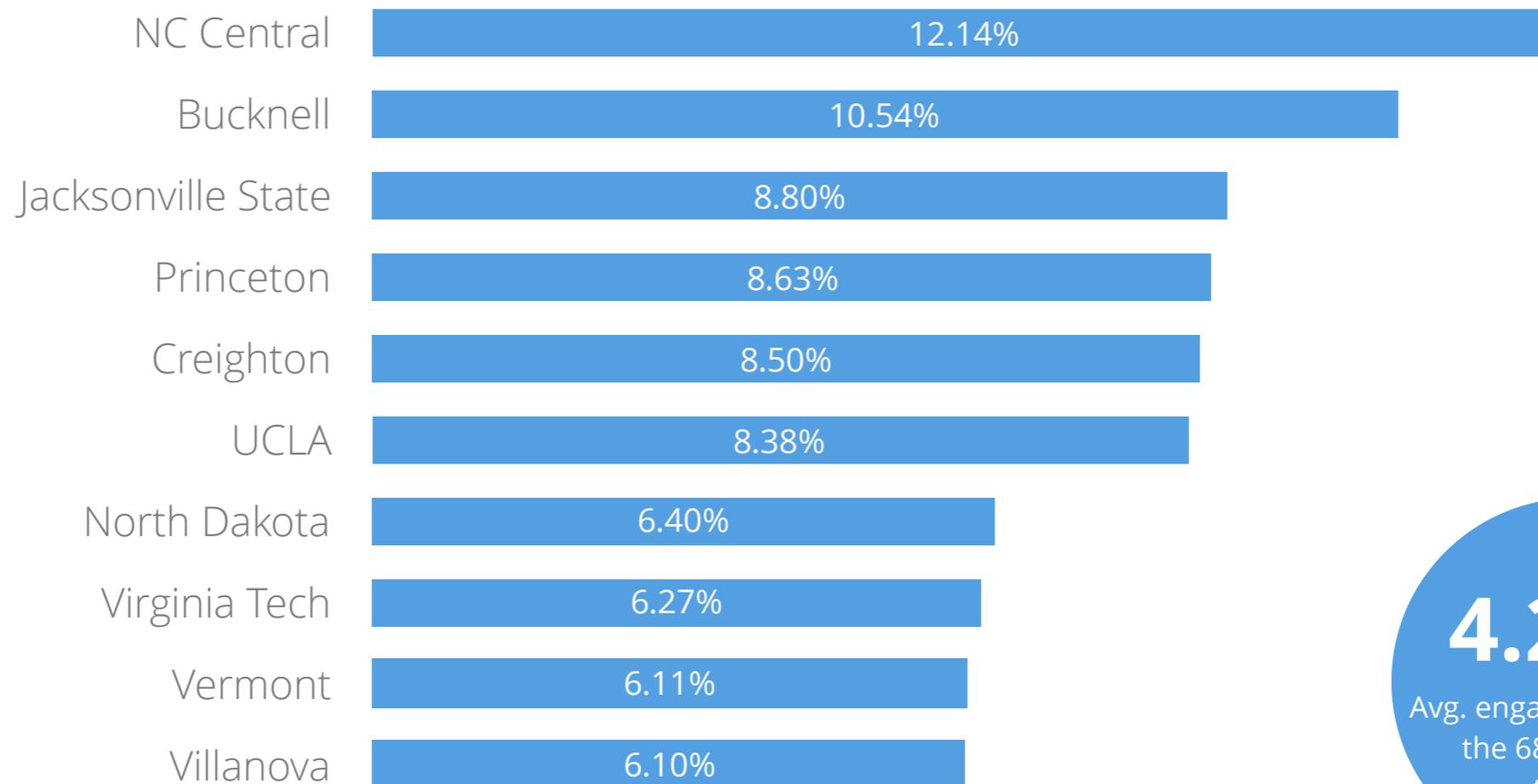
TOP TEAMS: INSTAGRAM



TOP 10 TEAMS: INSTAGRAM ENGAGEMENT



Calculated by average engagement rate per post on Instagram.



4.28%

Avg. engagement across
the 68 qualifying
teams

INSTAGRAM BEST PRACTICES

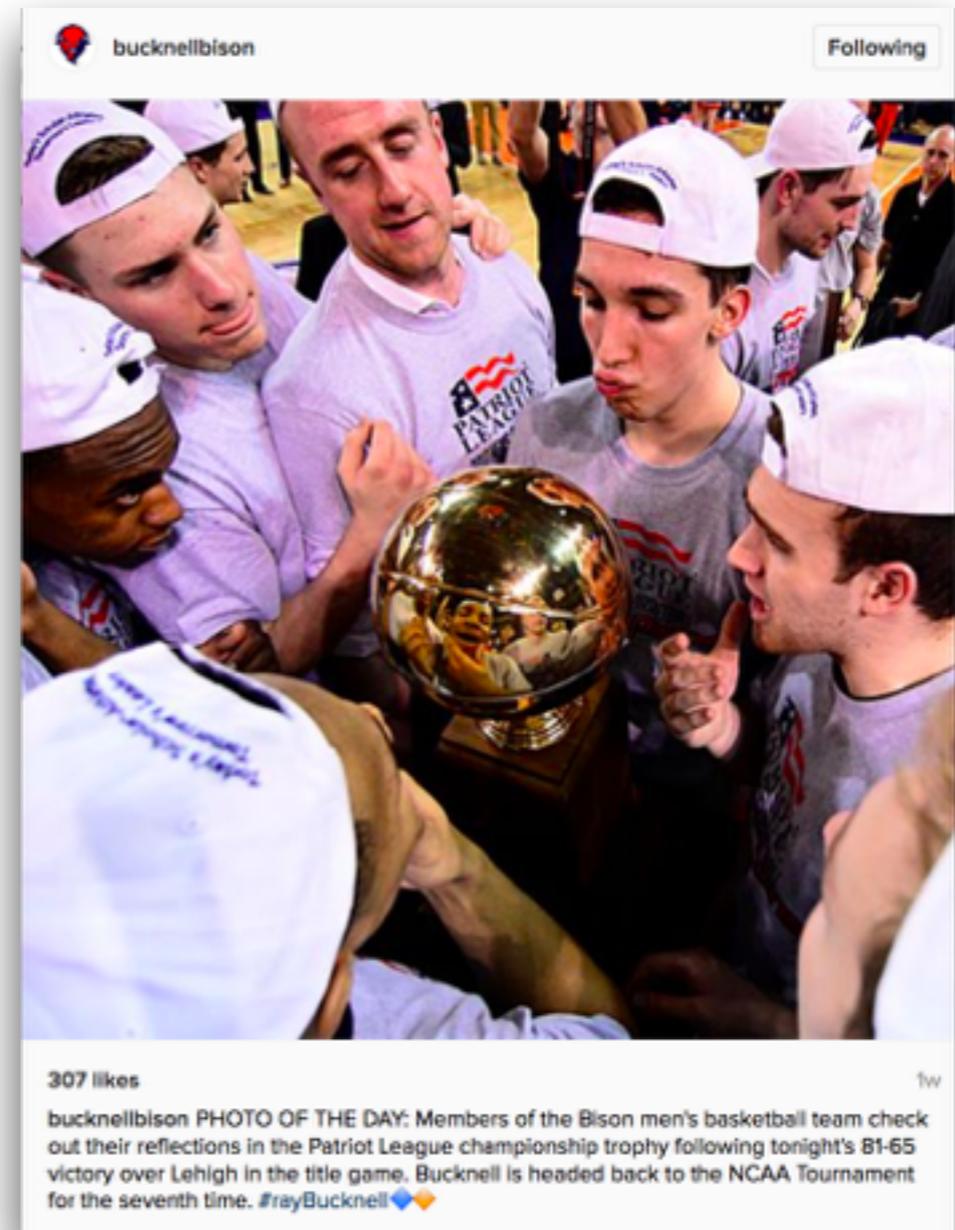


Capture candid moments like Bucknell

Fans love to feel like an insider. Bucknell gives their followers an up-close-and-personal look into a goofy team moment. Team mates check out their reflections in their Patriot League championship trophy earning their spot in the NCAA Tournament.

Sharing candid moments are a key component in a winning social media strategy. You can see how effective this strategy is in this post, which has a 30.8% engagement rate.

With an audience of over 215,000 fans, earning such a high engagement rate is no easy feat. Based on high activity, it appears that Bucknell has successfully identified their target audience.



INSTAGRAM BEST PRACTICES



Put fans front and center like the Gators

With a fan base of over 2.3 million people on social media and the largest in the NCAA Tournament this year, the Florida Gators know that achieving social media greatness means putting your fans front and center.

A Florida alumni proposes to his girlfriend on the kiss cam at a Gator basketball game and earned over 217,000 views! This was the most popular video post on Instagram this basketball season with 14.8 thousand engagements.

We don't know who's more excited, the couple, or the kid behind them.



INSTAGRAM BEST PRACTICES



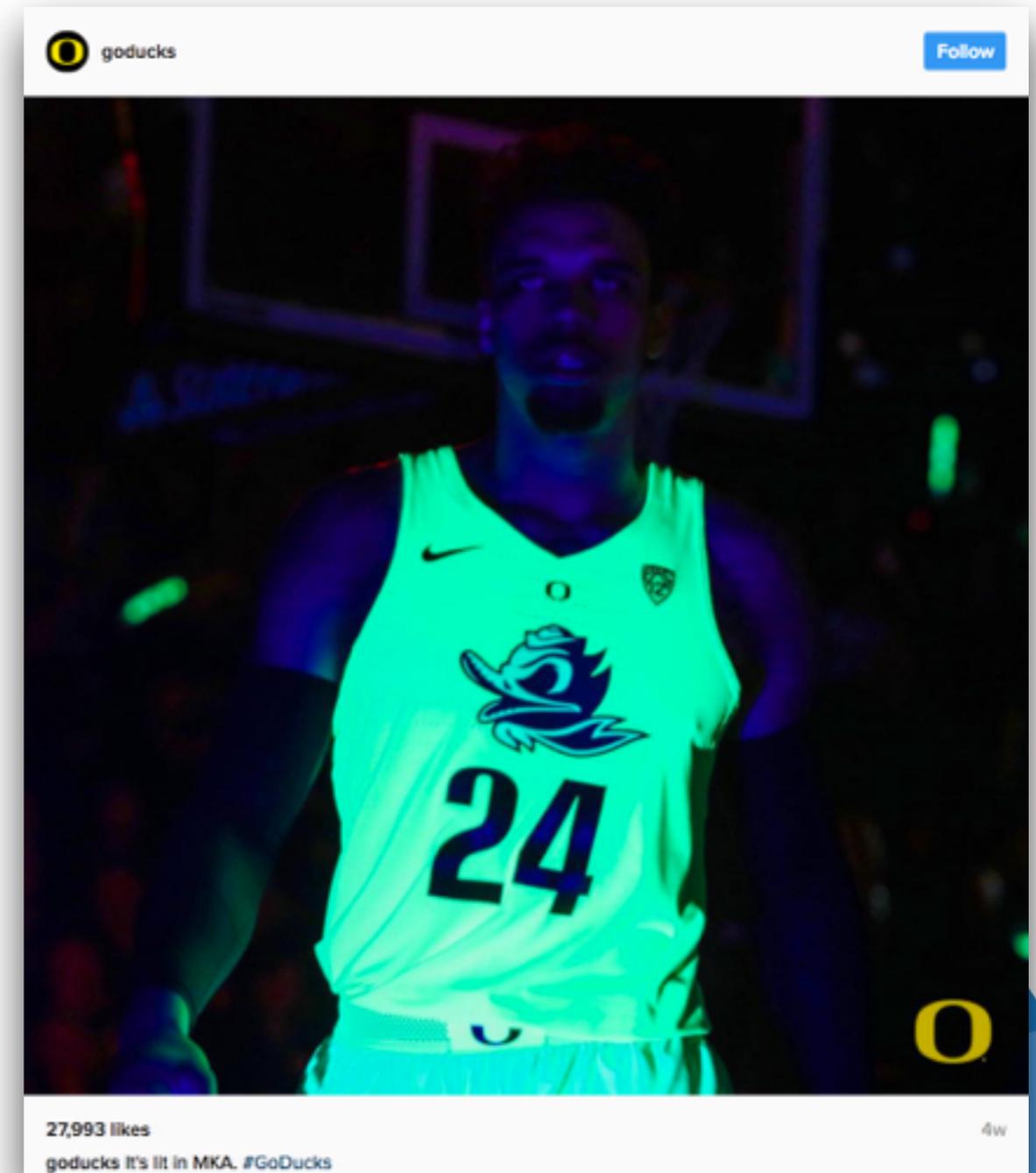
Use hashtags to increase followers like the UofO

Using hashtags in 99% of their Instagram posts, the Ducks understand the how important they are to increasing reach. Consistent hashtag use and posting across social channels has led to an 10% increase in audience size to a total of 1,947,249 fans this season.

The Ducks' Instagram posts hold the top 12 spots for total engagement this season as well as 41 of the top 50 spots. That's Duck domination.

Popular hashtags used include:

- #MarchMadness
- #GAMEDAY
- #Repost (remember to repost your fans posts!)



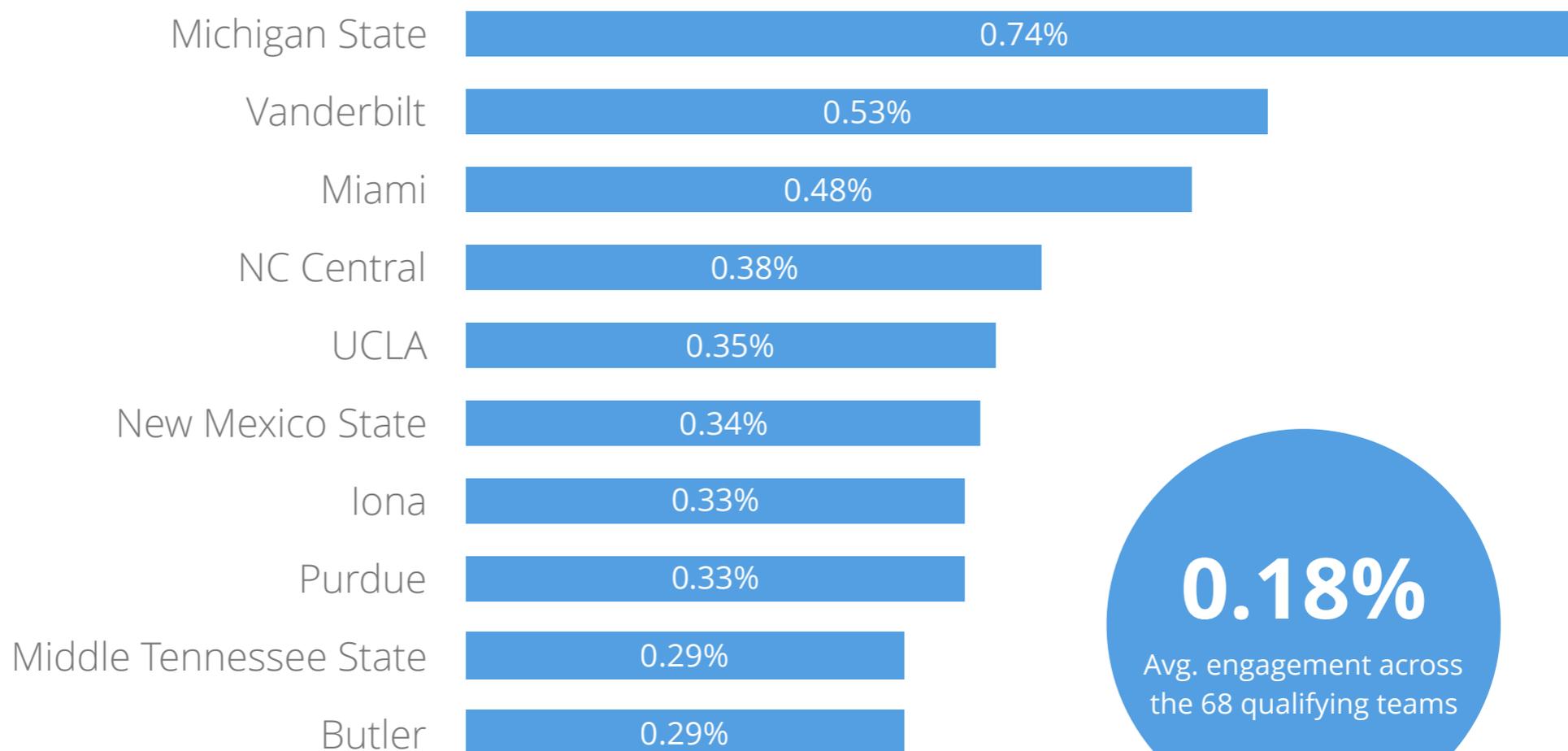
A blue-tinted photograph of a basketball game. Two players are jumping towards a basketball in the air. The player in the foreground is wearing a white jersey with "SAM HOUSTON" and the number "25" in red. The player behind him is wearing an orange jersey with "UTSA" and the number "33" in white. The background shows a basketball court with white lines and a blurred crowd.

TOP TEAMS: TWITTER

TOP 10 TEAMS: TWITTER



Calculated by average engagement rate per post on Twitter.



0.18%

Avg. engagement across
the 68 qualifying teams

TWITTER BEST PRACTICES



Leverage video and .gifs like Miami

While Twitter is traditionally more of a 140-character text medium, our data shows that posts with video and .gifs are usually better at generating engagement. Plus, you can't express this kind of happiness in 140 characters. This is priceless.

Miami is lucky in that their coach isn't shy in front of the camera and knows how to get down.

This post had a huge 16.3% engagement rate.

Our recommendation? Teach your coach some dance moves and capture them on video when they're bustin' a move.



TWITTER BEST PRACTICES



Share great news like Northern Kentucky

Norse clenched two of the top engagement rate spots on Twitter this season (22.4% and 20.1% engagement) sharing the news that they are the 2017 Horizon League Men's Basketball Champs!

For reference: This post's engagement rate on Twitter is literally 12,000% above the landscape average. Seriously.

Twitter is a natural a place for sports to communicate with fans. According to Nielsen, "Sports events comprised 12 of the Top 20 Most-Tweeted-About TV broadcasts during the year. This high level of engagement around sports events is significant as teams, programmers, and advertisers look to reach and amplify messaging to audiences."



TWITTER BEST PRACTICES



Capture emotional moments like Middle Tennessee

A surprise visit from player Reggie Upshaw's brother on senior night was an emotional moment Middle Tennessee captured and shared with their fans.

Sharing heartwarming moments like these helps build connectedness among the student body, builds morale, and will give you a spike in engagement. Everyone loves the warm-fuzzies.

This heart-tugging moment received a 14.1% engagement rate and over 3,600 likes, comments and retweets from friends and fans.





WHERE DO YOU RANK?

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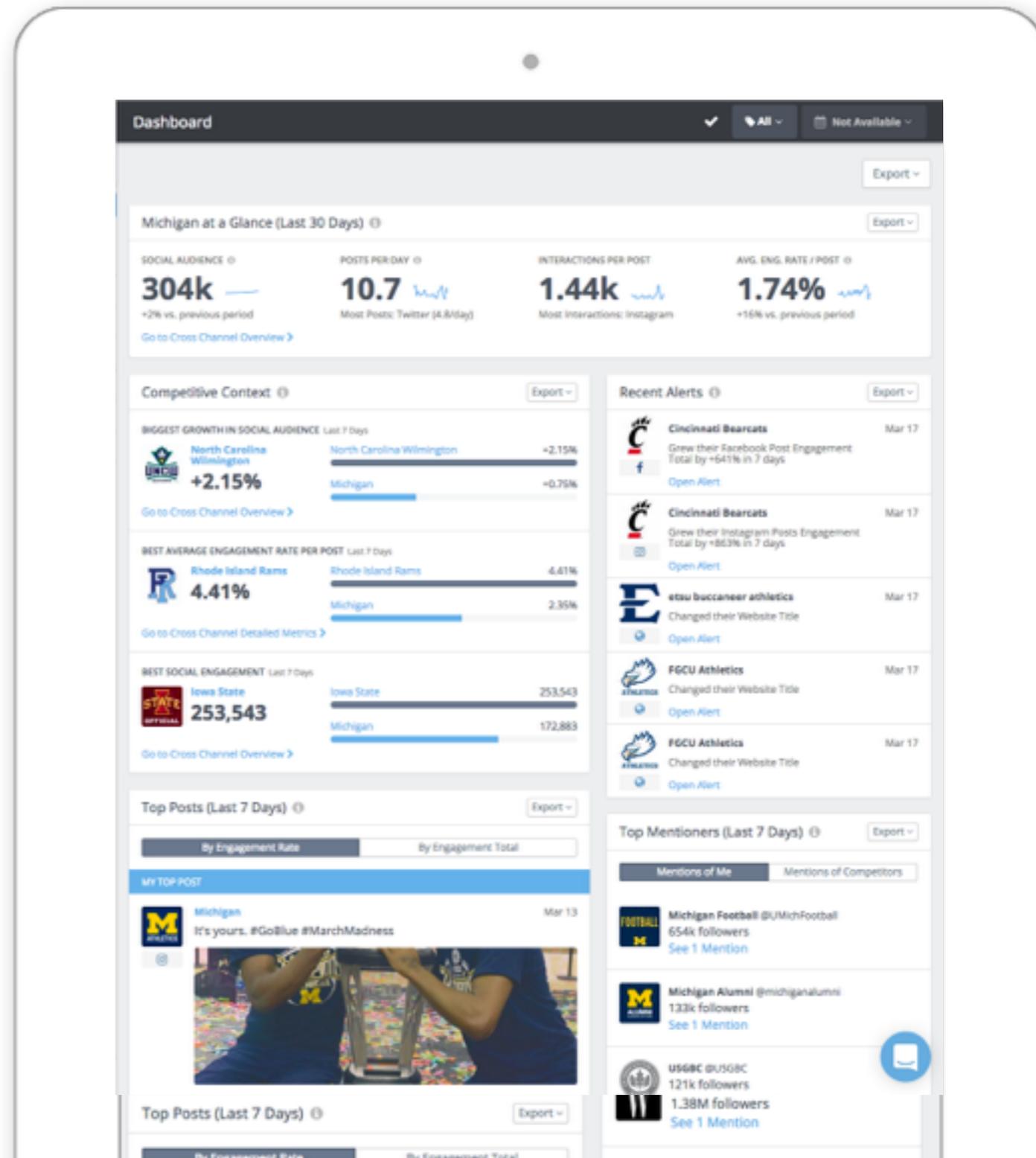
Be inspired by the competition

One of the best ways to get ideas for new content or social strategies is to check out what other universities and colleges like yours are doing.

You might find that they're having success by using a specific hashtag, or running a competition that sparks an idea for you to create your own.

If you'd like to give it a try, you can claim your free 7 day trial of Rival IQ and start tracking other universities, colleges and organizations today.

See how you rank ▶



ABOUT RIVAL IQ

Rival IQ is an easy-to-use tool that helps you:

Understand Your Social Landscape

Track results across all social profiles, including engagement, in influencers, social bios, and sentiment—for you and your competitors.

Gain Competitive Insight

Conduct competitive analysis in minutes. Monitor your industry, create benchmarks, and evaluate competitor activity in time to respond before the market shifts direction.

Simplify Access to Data

Find comprehensive analytics for all major social channels and the web, both for your company and your competitors - all from one source.

Get your free trial 