



new balance

**Elite vs. Casual Brand  
Positioning**

Activewear

# Within the running category, most brands fall under two primary categories:



## Elite Performance

Focus on competitive running accomplishments, elite athletes, and achieving optimal performance.



## Casual Running

Focus on running lifestyle, community, style, and the positive effects that running affords.



## Brands that focus on elite performance tend to focus on the achievement aspect of running and striving to reach new heights.

nikerunning [Follow](#) [...](#)

1,099 posts 5.7m followers 249 following

Nike Run Club  
Just Do It.  
nike.com/running

Followed by stepstudios, pablorochat, todddupke + 19 more

KEEPING TRACK Running C... [@](#) [@](#) [@](#) [@](#) [@](#) [@](#) [@](#)

POSTS [@](#) [@](#) [@](#) [@](#) [@](#) [@](#) [@](#) [@](#) [@](#) [@](#)

Eng. Rate: **0.48%**Posts Per Week: **1**

newbalancerunning [Follow](#) [...](#) [Save](#)

1,187 posts 184k followers 174 following

New Balance Running  
WE GOT NOW  
shop.newbal.co/running

Followed by stepstudios and jenny\_mc

POSTS [@](#) [@](#) [@](#) [@](#) [@](#) [@](#) [@](#) [@](#) [@](#) [@](#)

Eng. Rate: **2.96%**Posts Per Week: **2**

salomonrunning [Follow](#) [...](#)

2,686 posts 700k followers 329 following

Salomon Running  
Running... Why do we love it so much? Mention @SalomonRunning with #RunOnEmotion to share your running emotions with us! #TimeToPlay  
www.youtube.com/watch?v=k6VKtNpSU4

Followed by stepstudios, simonstanz, jenny\_mc + 3 more

#RunYour... HTR2 HTR1 TPI016 TPI015 TPI014 RunningT...

POSTS [@](#) [@](#) [@](#) [@](#) [@](#) [@](#) [@](#) [@](#) [@](#) [@](#)

Eng. Rate: **1.05%**Posts Per Week: **9**

# The top performing content categories for performance-focused brands are product shots and new releases, top-tier athlete achievements, and extreme/aspirational race stories.

### Product Shots and Releases



Engagement Rate: 1.22%  
[Click to view](#)

### Athlete Achievements



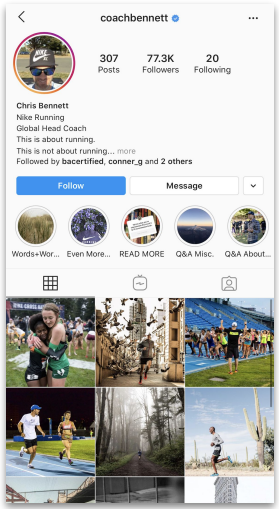
Engagement Rate: 3.45%  
[Click to view](#)

### Extreme/Elite Race Stories



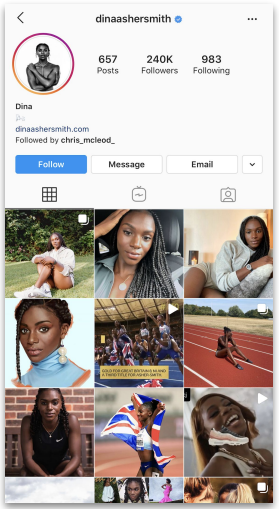
Engagement Rate: 3.12%  
[Click to view](#)

# Brands focused on elite running performance most often partner with influencers in the fitness and elite running categories - such as fitness/running trainers, world-class track and distance athletes, and adventure ultra runners.



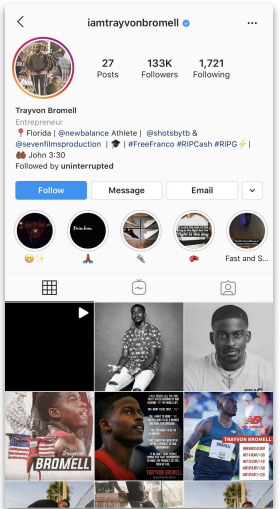
[Link to profile](#)

Average Eng. Rate: 6.3%



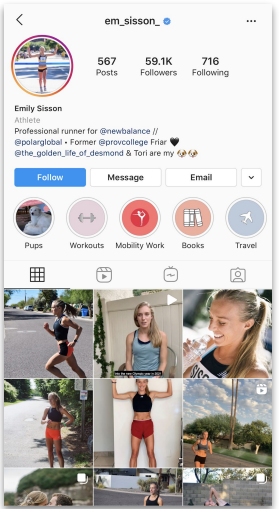
[Link to profile](#)

Average Eng. Rate: 6.5%



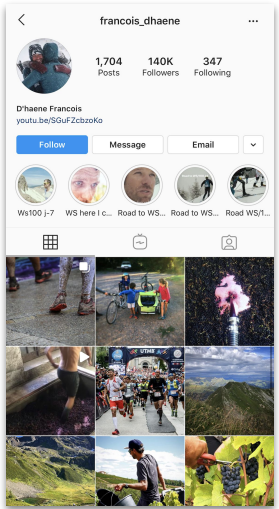
[Link to profile](#)

Average Eng. Rate: 2.1%



[Link to profile](#)

Average Eng. Rate: 6.0%

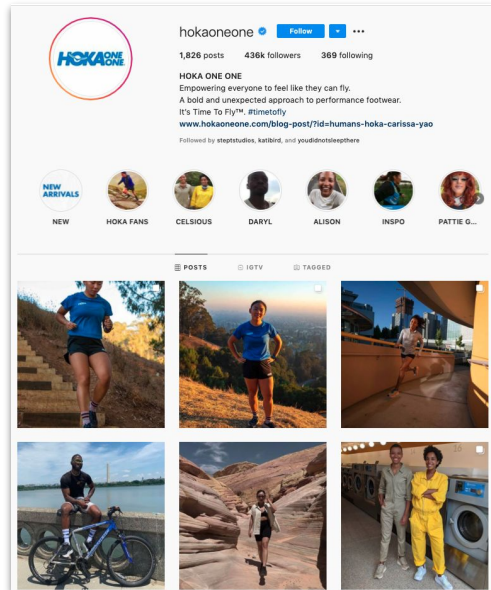


[Link to profile](#)

Average Eng. Rate: 6.5%



## Brands that focus on casual running & lifestyle tend to focus on the community and mental wellness aspect of running, with a more aesthetic approach to showcasing products.



hokaoneone Follow ...

1,826 posts 436k followers 369 following

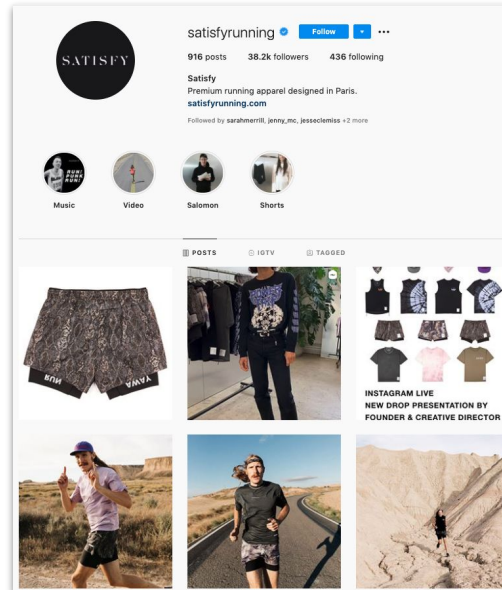
**HOKA ONE ONE**  
Empowering everyone to feel like they can fly. A bold and unexpected approach to performance footwear. It's Time To Fly™. #timetofly  
[www.hokaoneone.com/blog-post/?id=humans-hoka-carissa-yao](http://www.hokaoneone.com/blog-post/?id=humans-hoka-carissa-yao)

Followed by stepstudios, karibnd, and youidontsleepthere

NEW ARRIVALS HOKA FANS CELSIUS DARYL ALISON INSPO PATTIE G...

POSTS IGTV TAGGED

Grid of 9 images showing runners, lifestyle, and product shots.

Eng. Rate: **0.65%**Posts Per Week: **7**


satisfyrunning Follow ...

916 posts 38.2k followers 436 following

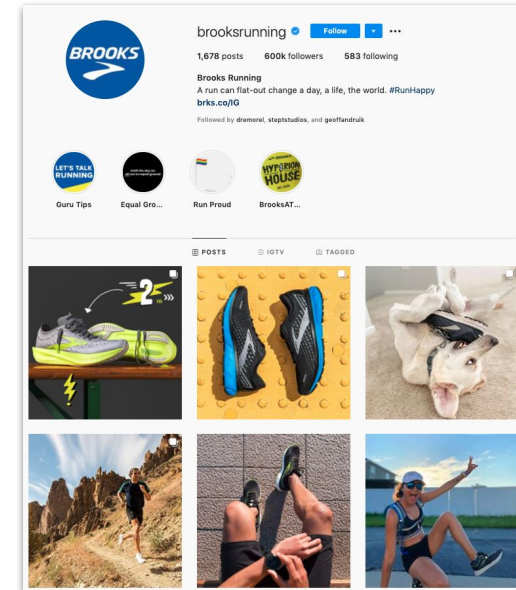
**Satisfy**  
Premium running apparel designed in Paris.  
[satisfyrunning.com](http://satisfyrunning.com)

Followed by sarahemill, penny\_mc, jessicelima + 2 more

Music Video Salomon Shorts

POSTS IGTV TAGGED

Grid of 9 images showing apparel, lifestyle, and product shots.

Eng. Rate: **1.53%**Posts Per Week: **14**


brooksrunning Follow ...

1,678 posts 600k followers 583 following

**Brooks Running**  
A run can flat-out change a day, a life, the world. #RunHappy  
[brks.co/IG](http://brks.co/IG)

Followed by dremard, stepstudios, and geoffandrick

Guru Tips Equal Gro... Run Proud BrooksAT...

POSTS IGTV TAGGED

Grid of 9 images showing runners, lifestyle, and product shots.

Eng. Rate: **0.64%**Posts Per Week: **4**

# The top performing content categories for casual running and lifestyle focused brands this year have been local running community & togetherness, inclusivity & encouragement, and featuring casual, non-elite runners.

## Community & Togetherness



Engagement Rate: 3.8%

[Click to view](#)

## Inclusivity & Encouragement



Engagement Rate: 1.2%

[Click to view](#)

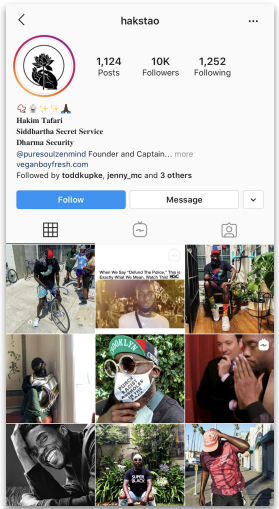
## Showcasing Casual Running Enthusiasts



Engagement Rate: 3.2%

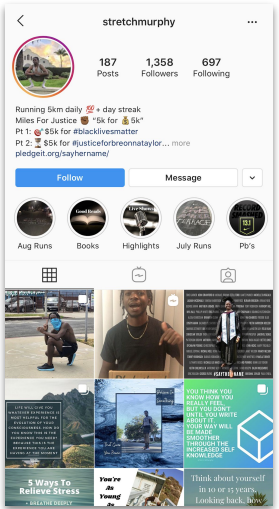
[Click to view](#)

# Influencer types that brands in the casual running category most often work with tend to be local community leaders and micro-influencers focused on community building in their area, inspiration, personal growth, and achieving goals through running.



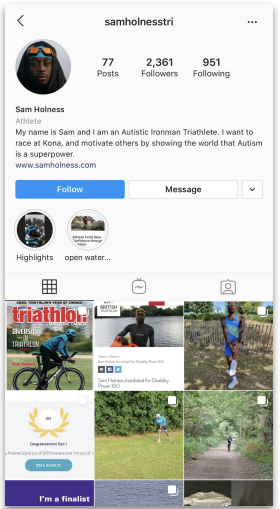
[Link to profile](#)

Average Eng. Rate: 6.5%



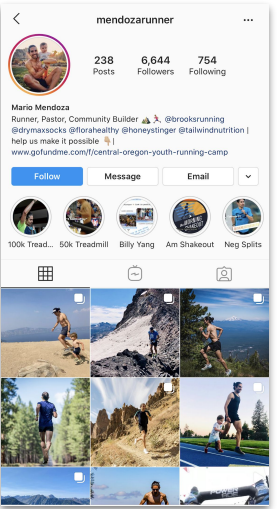
[Link to profile](#)

Average Eng. Rate: 4.9%



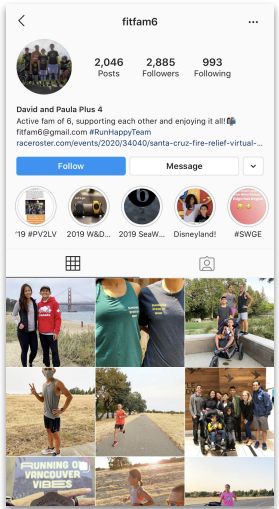
[Link to profile](#)

Average Eng. Rate: 14.1%



[Link to profile](#)

Average Eng. Rate: 8.9%



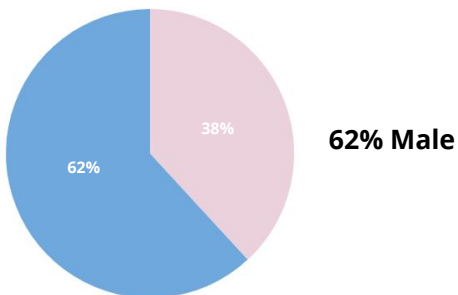
[Link to profile](#)

Average Eng. Rate: 3.8%

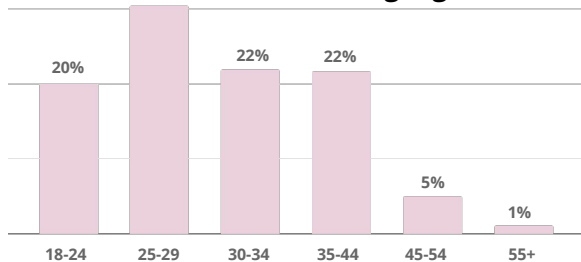


When comparing audience demographics, the audience focused on elite performance skews much more strongly male, and is slightly younger, on average, than the casual running audience.

Elite Performance

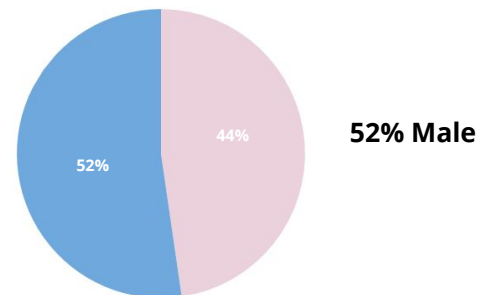


Avg. Age: 30

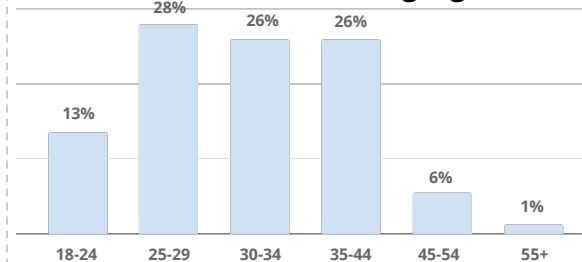


VS

Casual Running



Avg. Age: 32



# Key Takeaways

## From the Brand Positioning Case Study

**Messaging — A Blend of Casual & Elite:** There's a clear delineation between running brands that orient their messaging to align with casual runners vs. elite runners. However, based on our analysis, neither approach is necessarily "better" than the other, in strict terms of digital performance.

Naturally, elite-oriented brands aren't only trying to appeal and sell products to elite athletes. Their strategy is to align the brand with elite athletes so that the wider audience associates the brand with elite performance, and therefore purchases products as part of an aspirational customer journey.

Casual-oriented brands on the other hand, align themselves with the persona of an average person who is working to be a better version of themselves so that the wider audience associates the brand with supportiveness and inspiration, and therefore purchases products as part of a self-actualization customer journey.

Positioning a brand at either end of this spectrum can be successful. Furthermore, there may be a whitespace for brands that fall in the middle of the spectrum and combine aspects of both Casual and Elite.