

THE PLANNING OF IN-GAME SPONSORED EVENTS AND
PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITES IN PROFESSIONAL SPORTS

By

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ABSTRACT

Marketing and promotion have been used in sports for years to help market and support the games and teams. However, the use of promotions during the game to endorse sponsors and their products or services is becoming more common. Marketing and promotion directors for sports teams are utilizing this important tool to connect with fans and add value to the overall experience of the game. They are using breaks in the games for sponsored activities that retain the fans' attention and keep them entertained while promoting that sponsor's product.

This thesis contributes to the development of promotional planning in professional sports. In particular, it gathers research and data on the subject and offers insight into the growing importance of in-game promotions in sports. Information was collected from sports organizations along with other research that led to conclusions about the growing importance and use of promotional activities and sponsored events. It also discusses the processes and tools used to execute successful promotions. This paper gives an in-depth exploration of the planning and implementation of sponsored events and promotional activities used during games to promote a sponsor's product. It also examines the effectiveness of promotions as they become a more prevalent part of sports marketing.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my parents.

To you, dad, for showing me the importance of hard work and dedication in everything that you do.

To you, mom, for always being there for me and for giving me the guidance and knowledge that you always knew I needed.

To both of you for giving me the opportunity to further my education and for providing me with everything that I needed to be successful in life.

Thank you for everything that you have done. Words cannot explain the appreciation and admiration that I have for both of you.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The sports industry as a whole is worth over five-hundred billion dollars. A study done in 1999 by Street and Smith's Sports Business Journal reported that in 2005 sports sponsorships were worth about eight billion dollars and businesses were spending forty-five billion dollars a year on sports related promotions (Irwin, Sutton and McCarthy). According to *The Ultimate Guide to Sports Marketing*, "The International Events Group in Chicago reports that the amount spent on sports sponsorship continues to increase and it reached more than five billion dollars in 2000" (Graham, Neirotti and Goldblatt). While these numbers seem large, it does not seem as farfetched when a single Superbowl advertisement can cost up to three million dollars for a thirty-second commercial (Irwin, Sutton and McCarthy). Research shows that marketing and promotions have become an extremely integral part of sporting events. Sports fans are always being bombarded with excessive marketing during games, whether in person or on television. Every year the number of sports sponsorships increases as corporations push their brands into the game's atmosphere. Game broadcasts used to have fewer graphics and signs and only displayed the score on the screen. Now, with sponsors for every aspect of the game, the screens are covered with corporate logos on the field, scoreboard, and sidelines. Sponsors have even put their name on the instant replays and time-outs (O'Hern). The latest trend is to combine in game advertisements with big plays or breaks in the game. The industry has grown dramatically over the past few years with more

focus being put on sponsored promotional activities and events during games. Corporate sponsors are taking advantage of in-game promotions to connect with fans and spread their message. This area of sports marketing is becoming more popular as an effective way to add value to the overall fan experience.

It is important to understand the relationship between marketing and promotion. The definition of marketing often includes promotion as one of its components. The American Marketing Association defines marketing as “an organizational function and set of processes for creating, communicating, and delivering value to customers in ways that benefit the organization and its stakeholders” (Irwin, Sutton and McCarthy). Another definition offers that “marketing is the analysis, planning, implementing, and controlling of carefully formulated programs designed to bring about voluntary exchanges of value” (Irwin, Sutton and McCarthy). The traditional marketing mix consists of product, promotion, price, and place. Even though promotion is included as an element of marketing, a separate set of components apply. The promotional mix consists of advertising, publicity, sales promotion, and personal selling (Irwin, Sutton and McCarthy). While promotion is simply a portion of the marketing field, the two are equally important and independent especially in sports. In fact, most academics believe that sports marketing has developed into two major categories: “the application of marketing to the promotion of particular sports, sports events, and venues and using sports as a marketing tool to create and communicate brand values and associations that companies can use to market their products and services” (Irwin, Sutton and McCarthy). The second category focuses on using different promotions to help market a product either related or unrelated to sports. This typically takes place during the game. In between innings,

at half times, or during timeouts, promotional activities occur on the field or court to promote a specific product. These activities are usually sponsored and they sometimes require crowd interaction. The goal is to promote the sponsor's product while entertaining the crowd and getting them involved. Marketers and sponsors hope that these promotions will help consumers recognize and remember the product.

The basic promotional mix of advertising, publicity, sales promotion, and personal selling is used in sports to achieve the goal of promoting a particular sponsor. Successful use of the proper tools creates trustworthiness and credibility with the sports product or team which in turn adds value to the product. This is the ultimate goal of any marketing and promotional plan. Corporate sponsors are becoming more interested in in-game activities to promote their product more directly to consumers. The sporting event itself remains the main attraction, but the promotional activities that take place during the game offer additional entertainment for the crowd. The idea is not to take away the focus from the game, but to add excitement to keep the spectators interested. It also provides a more personal promotion of the product and gives consumers a connection with the sport. In addition, most in-game promotions are fun, interactive activities or contests that involve one or more of the fans. The promotional activities and entertainment provide added incentive to fans to purchase tickets to the game.

In recent years, more emphasis has been put on in-game sponsored promotions as an effective way to market the sponsor's product and provide extra entertainment to the fans. As these promotions appear more during sporting events, fans are getting more than just the game. They are receiving marketing messages that are often disguised as part of the arena or

stadium or as extra entertainment during time-outs and in-between innings. No matter what sport is being played, the promotional aspect of sports marketing is making a major impact on the sporting event.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

Sports marketing has always been an important part of the game. For years, marketers have been employing the use of many different tools to sell tickets to their games. They have always focused on the team and the game, the goal being to get fans in the stadium. Many different books and papers have been written on sports marketing and its use and success. However, with the recent shift towards the use of more in-game promotions as added entertainment and value for both sponsors and fans, there is limited research offered on the subject. Specific information on the planning and implementation of in-game sponsored events and promotional activities is lacking.

The Ultimate Guide to Sports Marketing by Stedman Graham, Lisa Delpy Neirotti, and Joe Jeff Goldblatt gives an in depth look at the processes and tools used in sports marketing. It provides information about general sports event management and the fundamentals of sports marketing. It discusses sports event planning and the logistics that go into each event while focusing on the marketing aspect. It also talks about the skills necessary to manage many different scenarios in sports events and marketing (Graham, Neirotti and Goldblatt). The President of NBC Sports, Dick Ebersol, wrote an insert in the beginning of the book expressing how he feels that the “sport event marketing and management field is big business and has grown enormously during the last two decades” (Graham, Neirotti and Goldblatt). He goes on to explain that the information covered in the book will be extremely beneficial to those who organize and produce effective sports events.

In addition, Ebersol talks about how there are limited books in the marketplace about this field because it is still developing (Graham, Neirotti and Goldblatt).

The Ultimate Guide to Sports Marketing provides the history and definition of sports event management and marketing. It discusses the basic tools and concepts necessary to produce a sports event for any organization. The book also lays out the tools for designing, planning, and controlling event logistics. It explains the fundamentals for planning and organizing every detail from food and hospitality to tickets and seating. In addition, the book explains when and how to negotiate contracts along with the financial aspect of sporting events. The same concepts discussed for sports marketing can be used and applied to the planning and execution of in-game sponsored events and promotional activities. While this book contains a great deal of useful information about sports event management and marketing, it lacks discussion about promotional activities and sponsored events that occur during sporting events. *The Ultimate Guide to Sports Marketing* offers basic information about certain aspects of promotions and events, but focuses more on the planning and management of overall sporting events rather than the individual promotional activities during the game.

The book *Sport Promotion and Sales Management* by Richard L. Irwin, William A. Sutton, and Larry M. McCarthy, is a textbook that includes insight and information about sports sponsorship. It distinguishes sports promotion from sports marketing and focuses mainly on the endorsement of a sports team, game, or athlete. It explains the tools and processes behind promotional planning of sports. It gives information about sponsorships, the

steps involved in obtaining them, and what to do once you have them. This book provides useful information about the basic promotion process for sports teams.

While there has been plenty of research done about sports marketing, little has been done in terms of sports promotional planning. The two are becoming integrated creating a new and growing field, and there are few books about the topic. Most of the books and information provided about the subject focus on the marketing and promotion of the game itself, the goal being to sell tickets. Considering the increasing focus that is being put on in-game promotional activities, it would be beneficial to gather the information together and apply it to field promotions. The same tools and information are used in the planning and implementation of promotional activities and sponsored events, with more emphasis put on the entertainment aspect during the game. Future research could be done in this growing field to collect data and analyze the effectiveness as it becomes more refined.

CHAPTER 3

Research

The research was designed to identify marketing and promotional activities that occur during game time and to evaluate their effectiveness. Several different methods of data collection could be used in the study of in-game promotional activities in sports. In order to meet the objectives of this study, a qualitative method of research was used to gather prevalent information about six different professional sports teams from marketers and promotional planners who currently work for each team. A set of ten questions was used to keep consistency and collect data that could be used to compare the similarities and differences among teams. In addition, field observation was conducted to see firsthand how the planning of the promotional activities was put into action. Observation was done on several different teams at both the major league and minor league of professional sports. This was essential in the comparison of the different types of teams and how the promotional planning and implementation differs among them.

Different sports teams were selected randomly from the four sports leagues including football, basketball, baseball, and hockey. Varieties of teams were used to get information from a wide array of sports and so that the data was not too narrow. In addition, major league and minor league professionals were interviewed, mainly focusing on the National Basketball Association, National Football League, and Minor League Baseball. There are four major professional leagues established in the United States. Those are Major League Baseball (MLB), the National Basketball Association (NBA), the National Football League (NFL),

and the National Hockey League (NHL). Each of these different sports categories was examined and compared as far as marketing and promotional efforts. This gave a range of information on which to base the comparison of the different types of sporting events. Some of the teams chosen included the Indianapolis Colts, Bowling Green Hot Rods, Louisville Bats, and Dallas Mavericks. They were asked a series of questions and each discussion took around 30-45 minutes. The questions were about the planning of promotional activities, the implementation of the activities, and the importance of the entertainment aspect. The following is the list of questions used in the research.

1. What is your opinion of sports marketing and event planning as one field?
2. What kind of promotional activities take place during your sporting event?
3. How important is the coordination and implementation of these events?
4. How big of a factor is the entertainment aspect of the promotions?
5. What goes into the planning and organization of these events?
6. What is the most important part of promotional activities during the game?
7. How does the in game promotions compare to pre game or post game?
8. How does the promotional activities during the game compare to the marketing of the actual game?
9. How effective are in game promotions?
10. Sponsors: how do you get them and how do you incorporate them into the game?

The qualitative research was used to gain insight into the reasons and processes behind promotional planning for sporting events. In addition to the collection of information, field observation was used to further develop an understanding of why promotional activities are a growing trend in sports as well as how the process is put into action.

The field observation consisted of viewing different sporting events and paying attention to the different promotional activities that took place during game time. The observation included different types of sports as well as different levels of those sports. Professional basketball and minor league baseball sports were observed for comparison. Related information and data found during the observations were recorded and analyzed in addition to the other qualitative information from the interviews.

CHAPTER 4

Results

The data collected in the research provided insight about the promotional activities at sporting events. Each of the professional teams surveyed produced similar answers to the set of questions used. As a general conclusion, promotional planning for sporting events is becoming a more prevalent part of the games. They also require careful planning and execution in order to reach the goal of adding value and entertainment to the fan's experience while meeting the goals of each sponsor.

Primary and secondary research has shown that sponsored promotions have become more than just a way for the sponsors to get their name to the public and promote a product or service. It has developed into an added entertainment for the fans that is used to increase the value of their overall game experience. It is a break from the sports action and a way to get fans involved in the game. The data gathered shows that the focus has shifted from the marketing of the sporting event itself to the promotions that occur when the action of the game is stopped. Marketers are leaving the game to the coaches and players and putting more emphasis on the other aspects to keep fans' attention and persuade them to return to more games. The outcome of the game cannot be controlled, but the entertainment can be. Even if the team does not play well, keeping the fans entertained and interested supplements the value and helps people to enjoy themselves regardless of the final score. The research reveals that sports marketers are utilizing the fact that fans realize that the team is not guaranteed a

win, but if they are offered more promotions and activities to add to the overall experience, they will come back again.

One of the most important topics discussed in the research is sponsorships. It is an integral part of sports promotions because many different events and activities would not be possible without the proper sponsorship. It is imperative for the marketing and promotions departments to gain sponsors in order to execute in-game promotions and events that add value to the game. Research shows that obtaining sponsorships for these promotions can happen in two main ways: first, the sponsor could be interested and call the team on their own to inquire about sponsorship opportunities and second, the team could contact the company and offer a sponsorship to them personally. The marketing or sponsorship department usually generates leads by focusing on companies that are spending money in other areas of advertising or that are brand new to the market. There are also databases and selling programs that can help to generate leads on sponsors (Mehl). Having a good long-term relationship with sponsors also helps gain new sponsorships and retains current ones. It is especially important to demonstrate the value of using the team when there are other sports teams in the same area. The challenge lies in showing the sponsors how they can benefit from using the team as a marketing tool for their business (Galiette). The sponsors trust the teams to make sure their promotions are carried out correctly and successfully. Additionally, it is important for the fan to have a good reaction to the promotions which in turn reflects on both the sponsor and the team. The sports professionals questioned for research gave a variety of examples of opportunities that are available for sponsors during games. Some of the options include signs in the arena or stadium, game night activities, giveaways, or

contests. Once the sponsor decides which option will be best for their company, the sponsorship department collects the details and specifics through negotiations with the sponsor. From there it is usually passed to the promotions or game operations department for execution (Smith).

The research also proved that there are certain aspects of promotional planning and sports marketing that are uniform for all sports. The main adaptation of planning promotions for different sports is arranging the order and placement of each promotion. For instance, one promotion may do well during a first quarter timeout in a basketball game, but may not be as successful after the first inning of a baseball game. The data also reveals that the most important thing marketers must remember is that there is an average of two minutes to keep the audience entertained, regardless of which sport is being played. Therefore, it is important to keep the promotion under a certain time limit while retaining the fans' interests. If the promotion is too complicated and too long, fans will become easily uninterested. Creative and unique promotions are always better at catching the crowd's attention. It was concluded from the questions that it is important to balance timing with creativity in order to create a successful promotion.

In addition to these important aspects of sports promotions, mascots are also a significant asset that is used to supplement the promotional activities. Most sports teams, if not all, have a mascot associated with their name. The mascot selection process is important to the success of in-game promotional activities. The characters are loved by the majority of fans, and they make the promotions more fun and exciting to watch. Fans will also grow to love their favorite mascot which creates a fan base for the mascot as well. This is also an

advantage when using the mascots in promotions. A simple promotional activity can be made more interesting by involving a mascot. In addition, the mascot can be used as brand recognition for the team. Mascots are memorable and easily associated with the team and therefore increase the value of the in-game activity or event for the team and the sponsor.

4.1 Planning

In general, sports promotional activities require proper planning and implementation in order to be carried out successfully during games. The results show that there is a consensus among the professionals interviewed about the processes and reasons for in-game promotional activities. There are only slight differences depending on the type of sport being played. Before getting into the planning of specific activities for each game, marketing and promotions directors must have a clear understanding of the tools used in the planning process. There are basic tools that are used among all sports marketing teams when planning for in-game promotional activities.

It is essential for promotional planners to understand and utilize the communication process. The typical communication process consists of a message encoded by the sender sent through a medium, decoded, and acted upon by the receiver. The medium and the message are two of the most fundamental parts of effective communication. The goal of any marketer is to convey the corporate sponsor's message to the target market effectively. Therefore, they must focus on ensuring that every promotional activity is put into action using the most appropriate medium and a clear message. It is essential because if the message

or medium were to fail to properly portray the sponsor's intentions, then the receiver (or fan) would be left confused and unresponsive and the entire promotion may go unrecognized (Irwin, Sutton and McCarthy). Other factors, known as noise, interfere with the decoding of the message. The greatest challenge a sports promotional planner must overcome is to successfully design a message and choose a medium that will get the sponsor's message through other factors that target the receiver. The most effective promotional messages include personal relevance, active discussion, and closure. The use of these three factors helps to increase the receiver's attention and comprehension of the message (Irwin, Sutton and McCarthy). In addition, active discussion gets the receiver involved and makes them more likely to retain information from the message.

The overall planning process begins with proposals sent to each sponsor to discuss and negotiate the activities. Once an agreement has been reached, the planning and resourcing begin. Each promotional activity or sponsored event usually passes through many departments for thorough planning and preparation. Those departments can include the marketing department, game operations, promotions, and graphics departments. Most of this planning takes place during the off-season, and the specifics and details are laid out before each game. Once the schedule for next season is received, it is reviewed so that the marketing team can pinpoint important dates.

Once sponsors are acquired and details are set as to what each sponsor expects from the team for that season, the marketing and promotions directors can plan each game specifically. Each game is planned out to the minute so that it is consistent with the sponsor agreements and fans are kept entertained. Most marketing teams use a written script to keep

things running smoothly and to keep each staff member informed and on the same page.

There are variations of formats used for scripts, but this method has proven to be extremely effective for promotional planners. The script is one of the most important tools used.

Marketers focus on achieving the greatest ability to connect with fans, physical on-field implementation, client value, and time constraints. The marketing teams have several meetings a week to review the previous game and plan the next one. They also research and review what other teams are doing with their in-game promotions to inspire ideas or make their current promotions better. Marketing teams will monitor the industry as well as what fans express that they want to see. It motivates the fans to buy tickets if their suggestions are used in the games.

The placement of each promotional activity or event is based on when that activity would be most effective. This can vary for different sports, but generally, the highest impact is generated in the middle of the game when most fans are more attentive. Timeouts and halftimes are the most important promotional times for any sport. The first and second quarters are usually used for sponsors to endorse their products due to the fans' high attentiveness at the beginning of the game; they are more likely to pick up on a marketing message in the beginning than in the end. The third and fourth quarters are used mainly to entertain the crowd (Mehl). Towards the end of the game, fans tend to be more restless and less likely to pay attention to specific marketing messages. The breaks after each quarter are more effective and therefore have a higher level of importance when planning the sequence and timing of activities. More planning goes into each quarter break than a regular timeout because they are expected and they occur at the same time in every game. In addition,

halftime is an extremely essential time for promotional planning and sponsored events to occur. It is a longer break and fans expect to be entertained during that time (Gonso). While placement of each activity is important to obtain maximum effectiveness, physical implementation must also be considered. Additionally, client value is considered when placing promotions in order during the game. If one client has more value than another based on agreements with the team, then they get priority when planning the activities. It is also important to be aware of time constraints. Most teams will maximize the use of time-outs by playing a commercial first while setting up and then having a promotional activity. The detailed planning and timing of promotional activities and events is extremely important in order for successful implementation.

4.2 Implementation

The use of these tools and communication components can be seen clearly in a well-constructed in-game promotion. It is extremely important to make sure that every detail is planned and coordinated with every member of the promotional team in order for the execution to run smoothly. Glitches in the implementation can easily be caused by insufficient planning or lack of communication. It is therefore essential to use planning and communication tools properly so that implementation can be successful.

Field observation conducted at the Bowling Green Hot Rods Minor League baseball team showed the successful implementation of promotions as well as errors in properly using the tools to create a good promotion. The observation allowed for examination of how the

process works from start to finish. The planning of on-field promotions was proven equally important as the implementation. Based on the sponsorships they had acquired pre-season, the Hot Rods planned promotions for each half-inning break according to the most appropriate time for execution of each promotion. They based their decisions about placement on when the crowd would be most attentive, physical implementation, and the amount of time they would have. They used a script to make sure that everyone was on the same page and that everything ran smoothly. This was essential so that the people on the field directing and those in the sound booth could coordinate the promotions. On several occasions, there were changes made or information did not get to the sound booth in time, and something went wrong with the promotion. Members of the promotion team would ask fans to sign up to participate in some of the promotions before the game so that all of the spots were filled, which caused problems when games were less crowded and there was difficulty finding people to participate. While it is hard to change the order and number of promotions because of available sponsors and budget, frequent fans became bored with seeing the same thing every night. The fan factor is important to consider when planning the order of promotions for each game.

Most teams try to incorporate other entertainment into the game to increase their fan factor (i.e. current music or movies). There are usually a group of activities that take place every night. They are rotated so that season ticket holders and frequent fans do not get tired of seeing the same thing. Different elements are also infused to make the promotions seem different. The goal is to keep the activities fresh while keeping the sponsor happy (Galiette).

Typical promotional aspects include: giveaways, in-game activities, fireworks, and special promotions that give access to the team on select dates. More specific examples include: “fan zone”, tailgating, inflatables for kids, virtual interaction, kickoff kid, coin toss kid, Jr. fans of the game, game ball delivery, and mascots. Giveaway items are a popular part of promotions. They can range from spirit rally towels to fleece blankets, depending on sponsors and availability. Teams also utilize theme nights and promotional group nights. These group nights are successful ways to include the fans and get them more involved with the team. In addition, there are often different displays on the concourse where fans can register to win prizes. This is also a great opportunity for sponsors to display items for additional promotion of their product. During the game, there are other opportunities for fans to participate in things like text trivia. There are also sponsored promotions featured on the video board. Promotions are geared towards enhancing fan experience and not toward ticket sales. Therefore, when it comes to in-game marketing, the focus is on using anything from videos on the screens, music, and national talent (Mehl).

It is very important for marketers and promotional planners to keep the entertainment aspect going throughout the game. They try to make sure each promotional activity has a certain level of entertainment so that “fans do not feel like they are being fed subliminal messaging.” It is also important to make sure the fans are not bored, or they will lose their interest in the promotions. Compared to pre or post game events, in-game promotions have less flexibility. Before or after the game is like a blank slate and each event can be adjusted to fit the time, but it is important to consider the fan base and the ability to retain their attention during that time (Coleman). Creating visuals is typically more effective and certain

promotions tend to be better accepted than other methods. The promotions that are creative and unique are more captive for fans, and usually create a lasting memory.

It is important to do a “dry run” of the game to ensure that everything runs smoothly and that all equipment or props are ready and working. If something goes wrong with the promotion, it looks bad to both the sponsor and the fan and the blame will fall on the team as a whole (Smith). Additionally, they try to incorporate upcoming events for the team along with the sponsored promotional activities.

Adam Mehl, the Director of Marketing for the Dallas Mavericks, said that the Mavericks have promotional giveaways connected with corporate sponsors planned for over half of their home games (Mehl). Coordination and implementation become especially important for the Mavericks because of the number of sponsored promotional activities that take place during each game. Fans look forward to new and fresh promotions that add value to the ticket price and create a better overall experience. The Dallas Mavericks have an entire department dedicated to the planning of these promotional activities and the sponsorships. Mehl said that they “look at it as throwing a party for 20,000 fans every game of the year, and a huge part of that includes the promotional aspect that adds to the overall fan experience” (Mehl). On-court promotions are a major part of any basketball game, and the Dallas Mavericks spend over a million dollars a year to entertain the fans and make sure that they enjoy their experience (Mehl).

Charley Smith, the coordinator of promotions with the Atlanta Hawks, said that the Hawks take pride in the on-court promotions. The Hawks focus on offering a wide variety of

opportunities for both the sponsor and the fan. Smith said, “The one thing that we cannot control is the outcome of the game but we can control the entertainment. Even if the team does not play as well, if we give the fan a good show it is added value and makes the fan feel like they enjoyed themselves” (Smith). They put a lot of focus and effort into the planning to ensure that the promotions will be successful in creating the right atmosphere for the overall fan experience. “We want the fans to feel appreciated and thanked for coming. We want to make this as enjoyable as possible,” Smith said about the Hawks goals for in-game promotions (Smith).

Promotional activities have especially become a major part of minor league baseball. Because the players are not as well-known, it is important to create an exciting atmosphere to draw the fans to the game. They usually cannot promote the players to sell tickets; therefore, baseball becomes second to other entertainment aspects of the game. Greg Galiette, the Assistant General Manager and Director of Marketing with the Louisville Bats said that they focus on sponsorships and season tickets to make their product more affordable to fans. “Promotions as a whole are very important at the minor league level. You cannot rely on players at this level, and you cannot promote them to help sell tickets. Therefore, baseball comes second to promotions” Galiette said.

Greg Coleman, the Manager of Sales for the Bowling Green Hot Rods, said that they “try to entertain fans for the entire game, from the time they enter to the time they leave.” The Hot Rods offer many different promotional activities and events to show the value of their product to the fans. “We try to take advantage of natural tendencies in the schedule and

play to the strengths and weaknesses. For example, if a game falls on a holiday we will plan more promotions and entertainment for that game,” Coleman said.

Football has is a multi-billion dollar business that is watched worldwide with thousands of fans that attend each game. In addition, the football season also ends with one of the most watched sporting events of all time: the Superbowl. This championship game has incorporated television commercials as part of their added entertainment and it has become part of the sport itself to watch the marketing and promotions during the game. Matt Gonso, Manager of Promotions with the NFL Indianapolis Colts said, “Our philosophy is to try to make it personal and reach out to fans using touch point marketing to sell the brand.”

Like any other sport, the growth of the National Hockey League generated more fans, and before long, marketing and promotions became a big part of hockey games. Raquel Toombs, the Promotion Manager for the Nashville Predators is in charge of in-market and in-arena promotions. As a professional hockey team, it is especially important for the Predators to implement effective promotions during the games to keep fans interested and entertained. The Predators have approximately fifteen theme nights per year. Some examples of theme nights include Sci-Fi Night and Nashville Zoo Night. Toombs said that their marketing department does everything they can to make sure they keep the fans coming back whether the team is winning or losing (Toombs).

Promotional ideas are created to drive ticket sales. While some promotions are more successful than others, every promotion is used as a learning experience and a stepping-stone to a more successful promotion for the following season (Toombs). The goal of marketing

teams is to get the “wow” factor from fans. This generates buzz and keeps fans coming back for more (Toombs).

CHAPTER 5

Conclusion

Promotional activities and sponsored events are increasingly having a greater impact and more important role in sports. More corporate sponsors and sport marketers are realizing the benefits and advantages of using these in-game promotions as they put their name on anything in order to advertise their brand during the game. Many professional sport teams are already implementing promotions successfully, but this area of sports marketing continues to become more refined.

The goal of this developing area of promotion is to support a sponsor's product while entertaining and involving the fans. Marketers are hoping to create a lasting memory in the consumers' minds that will help them recall that particular product. At the same time, the activities provide fans with entertainment to keep them interested during breaks in the game. It is a win-win situation for the marketers and the sponsors regardless of the outcome of the game. With the proper planning, promotional activities and sponsored events work in conjunction with the game itself to give fans the desired experience.

Overall, the research and data analysis shows how professional sport teams are utilizing the growing popularity of in-game marketing and promotions. Regardless of the type of sporting event, promotional activities and sponsored events are being used to add value and entertainment to the fans' experience. Marketers are realizing that fans want more than just the game and that promotions are a successful way to entertain fans and maintain interest during breaks in play.

The selected teams from the NBA, MLB, NFL, and NHL give examples as to how the promotional activities are being implemented. Not only do they add value to the fan's experience, but they also offer marketing and promotional opportunities to corporate sponsors. As stated in the results, fans are more likely to remember the promotional activities than the final score of the game. Therefore, when utilized correctly, in-game sponsored events and promotional activities are an essential part of any professional sporting event that marketers are taking advantage of, as they become a more prevalent and important area of promotion.

It is important for sports marketers to understand and develop promotional activities for their team. The use of this growing concept is proven to benefit both the team and the sponsors. The research in this paper shows that implementing promotional activities is a successful way to improve the overall value and quality of a sporting event. It is changing the game from a sport to entertainment, giving fans more than the sport that is being played. People are enjoying the added aspect of entertainment. It is improving their experience and they are enjoying it more. Sports marketers can use this valuable information to improve the quality of their game. It can be used to build an entertaining event that can better compete with the other entertainment options that are available to consumers. The promotional activities and sponsored events offer consumers the chance to enjoy sports with additional amusement. It also helps to expand the target market of sporting events and allows marketers to reach a larger audience. Overall, promotional activities and sponsored events give sporting events a more attractive quality that improves the entertainment value and satisfies a larger market.

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