

SPORTS MARKETING: TRENDS, CLASSROOM TECHNIQUES AND INDUSTRY EXPERIENCES

**Mark J. Brand, College of Business, St. Ambrose University, 518 West Locust St.,
Davenport, IA 52803; brandmarkj@sau.edu**

**Thomas C. Boyd, California State University, Fullerton, 800 North State College Blvd.,
Fullerton, CA 92834; tboyd@fullerton.edu**

**Vassilis Dalakas, California State University, San Marcos, 333 South Twin Oaks Valley Rd.,
San Marcos, CA 92096-0001; vdalakas@csusm.edu**

ABSTRACT

With courses in sports marketing becoming more and more in demand by students, the authors felt it appropriate to provide a look at this area of specialization from three perspectives: future industry trends, how to teach the fundamentals of the course to marketing students, and the nature of careers available to sports marketing graduates and the role of internships in gaining first-hand industry experience prior to full-time employment.

INTRODUCTION

Within the last several years the field of sports marketing has become a "hot" area of interest to students both at the undergraduate and graduate levels. In fact, many high schools are now offering a course in the field. Tradition has it that at the undergraduate level many institutions offer this program within the physical education or kinesiology departments. Recently, there has been movement toward placing these courses within the marketing department as sports marketing and management have become part and parcel of a company's marketing arsenal.

FUTURE TRENDS IN SPORTS MARKETING

Prior to the recent financial crisis facing almost all nations, the three key trends in sports marketing were a) the return to sponsorship, b) the role of stadia and television in relationship to the fan, and c) the emergence of the fan as the critical player in the marketing mix. Needless to say, the financial crisis that struck particularly hard at financial institutions, key sponsors of both teams and venues, has taken its toll. The prognosis is not good for the foreseeable future as investors and government bodies, especially those who have provided those financial companies with rescue funds, are suspect of funds being used for any purpose other than those stated in the various rules and regulations.

Regarding the return to sponsorships, this means finding something that is important to the fan as well

as the funding organization. Sponsorships should help the fan build a long term relationship with both the team as the vehicle of the sponsor and the brand or company that is funding the sponsorship. Today, the stadium and television are one of many means of reaching the fan. Personal communication devices now provide sponsors and their teams with the ability to communicate outside of the stadium or wherever the individual previously watched the game. In addition to reaching the fan when and where they may desire, the message may be targeted so as to make each communication highly personal to the fan. Finally, the focus of tomorrow rests with enhancing the fan's return on experience. Prior to the onset of the financial crisis, fans had countless ways of spending discretionary dollars. Brett Yormark, the chief executive officer of the New Jersey Nets NBA franchise put it best when he said, "We're not just competing for people's entertainment dollars anymore. We're going up against milk and orange juice."

TEACHING SPORTS MARKETING IN THE TRADITIONAL CLASSROOM

One of the greatest challenges sport marketing professors face is dealing with the reality of the sports industry; namely that it is virtually impossible to break into it without knowing someone and/or having experience working with a sport entity. Thus it becomes vital for those teaching sports marketing in a traditional classroom to find ways to provide real-world experience and contacts to their students.

First, a sports marketing class provide opportunities to gain practical experience. Sports entities, including university athletic departments, minor league teams, and major sports, are all eager to make contacts and use student labor to perform needed projects and tasks. Contacting the marketing manager for any of these organizations can result in either projects or service learning for students.

Second, students need to learn about what sport organizations are looking for and how to get their foot in the door. Advice for students applying to a sport organizations include learning how to write an appropriate resume and cover letter, avoiding the starry eyed fan syndrome, and finding and creating a mentor within a sport organization.

Third, there are several hard lessons to be learned when negotiating a class consulting project with a sports organization. In addition to managing expectations on both sides, it is important to make sure that the resources available to students are defined up front. Also, make sure that the organization is committed to working with the students during the semester in order that students will have necessary information to create relevant and innovative ideas.

SPORTS MARKETING INTERNSHIPS AND CAREERS

In general, sports marketing programs seem to have a relatively easy job in recruiting students. However, it is significantly more challenging to have graduates that find employment in the sports industry. Internships are becoming increasingly important for helping students build their resumes and increase their appeal to potential employers. Several programs are now officially requiring their students to complete an internship before graduating.

Despite the increased emphasis placed on internships, placing graduates continues to be a challenge. A big reason is the fact that many of the

students enrolling in sports marketing programs aspire to careers involving marketing a professional sports team. However, there are significantly more opportunities for students to become involved in the industry both through their internships as well as for their future jobs.

First, there are careers pertaining to marketing sports to attract and maintain sports fans to attend sporting events or follow them through the media. These careers involve marketing for professional sports teams at all levels as well as collegiate teams, including positions primarily in ticket sales and in promotions but also operations. Most of the students tend to usually be interested in those positions often overlooking other opportunities. Moreover, it may be challenging for programs that are located in areas without sports teams to offer these positions to their students.

Second, there are careers pertaining to marketing sports to sports participants. These entail positions with companies offering products and equipment for sports as well as recreational facilities offering opportunities to consumers to participate in sports. Given a high interest in fitness and sports participation in the United States, this area offers many opportunities to students for internships and jobs.

Third, there are careers pertaining to marketing any good or service through the use of sports. This area provides endless opportunities, especially for companies engaging in sponsorships, licensing, and stadium naming rights.