

Chapter 25

Digital Media and Sports Advertising

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ABSTRACT

Advertising and sponsorship in the area of sports continue to be a prominent way for companies to receive brand exposure to a desired target audience and obtain a brand association with a popular entity. The fundamental advantages of advertising and sponsorship in sports now combine with digital media to provide more extensive and unique opportunities for companies to promote their brands and potentially better connect with their customers. It is clear that digital media do not replace more traditional forms of sports advertising and sponsorship, but rather represent additional vehicles for promotional communication. This chapter begins by providing an explanation of the goals and advantageous characteristics of a sports sponsorship for a company. This review is necessary because developing an agreement with the sports property is required for sponsors to obtain exclusive rights to content (footage of that sport), and logos they could use on their product packaging or in their advertisements to better communicate a brand association. The chapter then offers four examples of companies using digital media to execute their sponsorships with sports properties: Sprite and the NBA, Verizon and the NFL, AT&T and the Masters Golf Tournament, and Wise Snack Foods and the Boston Red Sox and New York Mets. A fifth example looks at how sponsors are using another prominent media destination for the sports audience, ESPN. The chapter reveals the endless possibilities of what a sponsorship using digital media can include in the area of sports.

INTRODUCTION

It can be said that every time the technological communication environment changes and causes the mass media use of the audience to change,

so too does the advertising industry. While the technology has changed, the ultimate goal of advertising has not. The most general objective of any advertisement is to persuade (e.g., Leckenby & Stout, 1985; O'Guinn, Allen, & Semenik, 2006; Tellis, 2004). However, understanding what

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-60566-792-8.ch025

determines the effectiveness of advertising as a persuasive form of communication continues to be an issue raised by many scholars (e.g., Tellis, 2004; Till & Baack, 2005) and an obvious concern of all practitioners.

As audiences are provided with a multitude of communication vehicles to experience media content, advertisers simply need to be in the locations where their brands will be noticed by their desired target audiences. Bellamy and Traudt (2000) explain the necessity of brand exposure as “the fundamental concept is that a recognizable brand will more easily attract and retain customers than an unrecognizable one” (p. 127). In addition to the advertising placement to obtain brand exposure, some scholars indicate the message content of an advertisement can influence the audience’s ability to better remember the brand name and to get them to think favorably about the advertised brand that can ultimately lead them to purchase the brand (e.g., Kelley & Turley, 2004; Till & Baack, 2005). The achievement of persuasion through advertising needs to combine the strategic placement and the proper message content to best create the desired effect. Fortunato and Dunnam (2004) thus describe any advertising strategy as having three specific goals: (1) obtaining exposure to the desired target audience, (2) increasing product brand recall, and (3) increasing consumer behavior (i.e., purchasing the brand).

Achievement of these persuasive advertising goals is, however, much more complicated in the current technological communication environment. Advertisers need to adapt to the technology and understand that digital media offer opportunities to better connect their brands with the consumer. For sports advertising digital media prominently include the Internet, both the company’s own website and placement on the websites of leagues, teams, or sports media companies (i.e., ESPN or Sports Illustrated), hand-held wireless devices, and integration of advertising into video games. DeFleur and Dennis (2002) describe digital media as “the product of

‘convergence,’ the coming together of all forms of communication into a unified, electronically based, computer-driven system” (p. 215). They add digital media are interactive and involve “digital storage of information, its retrieval and dissemination” (p. 215). Bianco (2004) contends interactivity and a more precise measurement of the message’s impact are the two advantages of advertising on the Internet instead of traditional mass media. He explains the interactive capability “enables marketers to gather reams of invaluable personal information directly from customers and adjust their sales pitch accordingly, in some cases in real time” (p. 65). O’Guinn, Allen, and Semeniuk (2006) summarize that prominent among the advantages for advertisers in using digital media are: target market selectivity, tracking, deliverability and flexibility, and interactivity (p. 572).

The area of sports remains a viable advertising vehicle to achieve brand exposure, especially to the desirable, and relatively hard-to-reach, male audience between the ages of 18 and 49 (e.g., Wenner, 1989). Wenner (1989) points out that “media organizations buy and sell sport much as they do any other news or entertainment commodity. The content per se is not what is being sold; rather it is the audience for that content that is being sold to advertisers” (p. 22). In speaking specifically about the advantage of advertising during sports television programming in relation to the competitive advertising environment, Bellamy (1998) adds that, “with a seemingly endless proliferation of television channels, sport is seen as the programming that can best break through the clutter of channels and advertising and consistently produce a desirable audience for sale to advertisers” (p. 73).

Another important variable in addition to the demographic characteristics in evaluating advertising in the area of sports is the nature of the sports audience. Sloan (1989) contends the term *fan*, short for fanatic, is more descriptive for people who watch sports, rather than describing them as merely spectators or viewers. For fans,

experiencing sports has been shown to provide emotional satisfaction (Madrigal, 2000; Mullin, Hardy, & Sutton, 2007; Shank, 2009; Tutko, 1989; Underwood, Bond, & Baer, 2001; Wann, Royalty, & Roberts, 2000; Zillmann, Bryant, & Sapolsky, 1989). Tutko (1989) speaks to the emotional characteristic of being a sports fan, claiming that:

There can be little doubt that the athletic area has become a center for taking care of our emotional needs. We participate in and are spectators of the emotional charge. If athletics did not provide excitement it would be gone in a short period. We look forward to indulging in the joys of victory but all too often steep in the agony of defeat. Without the occasional emotional charge, life would be a little bit duller--a little bit less alive and perhaps even have less meaning (p. 113).

Because experiencing sports can satisfy emotional needs the sports audience has been described as very loyal in its behavior (Madrigal, 2000; Mullin, et. al., 2007; Underwood, et. al., 2001; Wann, et. al., 2000). Funk and James (2001) indicate the emotional and loyalty characteristics of the sports fan can result in consistent and enduring behaviors, including attendance and watching games on television. The emotion and loyalty characteristics certainly extend to behavior in other media forms such as print publication purchases, sports talk radio, and Internet or other digital media use to experience sports content.

SPORT SPONSORSHIP

In addition to traditional media advertising, particularly commercials during live games, and as the audience is increasingly being presented with multiple media options, sponsorship has become a viable strategy for many corporations to obtain the necessary brand exposure and achieve a better connection between the brand and the consumer (Fortunato & Dunnam, 2004; Meenaghan, 1991,

2001; Mullin, et. al., 2007; Pedersen, Miloch, & Laucella, 2007; Shank, 2009; Walliser, 2003). Savary (2008) explains the overall challenge in the current advertising environment, stating “brands must now forge an emotional connection with the consumer. Marketing messages must show how a product is relevant to a consumer. Campaigns need to evoke affinity and create a ‘that brand is like me’ sentiment. Brands need to show future customers not just how a product meets their needs, but how the product integrates into their life and how the brand reflects their values and reinforces their self-image” (p. 212). She argues, “the discipline of sponsorship and engagement marketing is ideally and perhaps uniquely suited to this challenge. Engagement marketing professionals know that this discipline surpasses other forms of marketing in inspiring passion and loyalty, creating a sense of shared values and turning fans into brand advocates” (p. 212). Corporations obviously believe that sponsorship of sports properties (i.e., leagues, teams, events, and athletes) is a valuable tool in the communication marketing mix as evidenced by the enormous financial investment in this strategy. The European Sponsorship Association estimated that over \$30 billion was spent on sponsorships worldwide in 2005, with 85 percent of those expenditures with sports properties (Croft, 2006).

It should also be pointed out that sponsorship with the more popular sports properties (i.e., NFL, NBA, Major League Baseball, or the Olympics) can be cost prohibitive for many companies (Fortunato & Richards, 2007). For example, Adidas agreed to pay the NBA \$400 million over 11 years to be the official uniform supplier for the league (Lombardo, 2006). T-Mobile agreed to pay the NBA \$100 million over three years to be the official wireless communication brand for the league (Lefton, 2006). Molson Coors agreed to pay the NFL \$500 million over five years to be the official beer sponsor for the league (Kaplan & Lefton, 2006). The Olympic Partner Program (TOP) has eleven worldwide sponsors that pay

approximately \$75 million per four-year cycle that includes both a Winter and Summer Olympic Games (Thomaselli, 2004).

What makes sponsorship such an attractive strategy for many corporations is that all of the parameters of the deal are negotiable and bound only by what the sponsor and the sponsored property can agree to (Fortunato & Dunnam, 2004). Although a sponsorship can take on many different forms, and therefore is difficult to define, researchers have identified the core components of a sponsorship agreement as an investment by the corporate sponsor in exchange for the exploitable commercial potential associated with the event or property (Meenaghan, 1991, 2001; Mullin, et. al., 2007; Ukman, 1996).

The benefits to the sports properties are obvious upon entering into sponsorship agreements as they add another major revenue stream. There are also benefits to the sponsoring brand, primarily the needed branded exposure. To assist with brand exposure through the sponsorship of a sports property there is the advantageous characteristic of communicating the brand to the audience during the context of the actual game or event – whether the audience is attending the game or experiencing it through the mass media. Stotlar (2001) explains that sponsorship can help reduce clutter and it can be more effective than traditional spot advertising by weaving elements of the brand into the actual game or event broadcast. The sponsorship communication during the broadcast of a game could include stadium naming rights, stadium signage that appears prominently on the television broadcast, sponsored scoreboards, halftime and pregame programs, and/or even having the announcer say the name of the brand. For some companies, particularly equipment manufacturers, the sponsorship features prominent athletes using the brand during competition (i.e., Tiger Woods and Nike).

In a sponsorship agreement this brand exposure often comes with the negotiated characteristic of exclusivity for the sponsoring corporation within

its particular product category. Sports leagues and their teams sell exclusivity in a variety of product categories (i.e., airlines, automobiles, financial services). Exclusivity simply eliminates any competition that one company might receive from a rival within that product category at the sponsored event or location (e.g., Fortunato & Dunnam, 2004). Miyazaki and Morgan (2001) note that exclusivity avoids competitive interference that would be incurred in other media contexts (p. 10). For some industries, such as beer, soda, and credit cards, the characteristic of exclusivity provides not only brand exposure, but the additional advantage of stadium point-of-purchase of their brand products to an audience without competition. Through an exclusive sponsorship agreement with a team, a trip to the stadium might provide the consumer with only one brand option, either a Pepsi or a Coca-Cola depending on who is the team's sponsor. With some stadiums attracting millions of customers each year, these exclusive sponsorships are an extremely valuable commodity (e.g., Fortunato & Richards, 2007). In fact, Coca-Cola had pouring rights with four of the top five major league baseball teams in attendance in 2008 (New York Yankees, Los Angeles Dodgers, St. Louis Cardinals, and Philadelphia Phillies) giving it exclusive access to over 14.8 million consumers at those team's ballparks (<http://sports.espn.go.com/mlb/attendance>--It should be noted that Pepsi is the official soft drink of Major League Baseball and now also sponsors the New York Yankees as well as the New York Mets).

In addition to brand exposure and exclusivity, many authors indicate that developing and communicating a brand association between the sponsoring brand and the sponsored property is an objective that can be achieved through a sponsorship (e.g., Cornwell & Maignan, 1998; Dean 2002; Gwinner, 1997; Gwinner & Eaton, 1999; Irwin, Lachowetz, Cornwell, & Clark, 2003; Meenaghan, 2001; Pedersen, et. al., 2007; Shank, 2009; Till & Shimp, 1998; Walliser, 2003). Dean (2002) explains that "by associating itself with the sponsee,

the sponsoring firm/brand shares in the image of the sponsee” (p. 78). Grohs and Reisinger (2005) suggest “the aim is to evoke positive feelings and attitudes toward the sponsor, by closely linking the sponsor to an event the recipient values highly” (p. 44). Stipp and Schiavone (1996) point out the sponsorship goals assume the target audience for the sponsorship will transfer their loyalty from the sponsored property or event to the sponsor itself.

To help achieve this transfer the sponsorship agreement allows the advertiser to communicate its association to the sports property by granting the sponsor rights to exclusively use content (footage of that sport), and logos that it could use on its product packaging or in its advertisements. For example, a Pepsi case or even an individual can or bottle, can have the image of the New York Mets logo. Or, McDonald’s can have the Olympic rings logo on its bags and use that logo in its television commercials that also communicated to the viewer that McDonald’s is a “Proud Partner” of the Olympic Games (Fortunato, 2008). The ideal outcome for the sponsor is that the popularity and the positive image and reputation of these sports teams and events can precipitate a similar favorable feeling by fans and consumers toward its brand. New York Met fans might think favorably about Pepsi because that company supports their favorite team. Shaw and Amis (2001) support that claim concluding sponsorships are an effective communication tool that can alter and enhance a company’s image and reputation. Fortunato (2008) further states that some of the television commercials of Olympic sponsors during the broadcast of the Olympics games featured nothing more than an association with the event (i.e., Coca Cola having a commercial where people sat on a couch as if it was a bobsled or inviting viewers to “drink Coke, live Olympic,” rather than speaking to any specific brand features). This use of the sport in the company advertisements also further promotes the league, team, or event. So sponsors are not only paying an upfront fee for an association and usage rights to content and

logos provided by the league, they are promoting the league or team through their own advertising (i.e., Burger King as a sponsor of the NFL using NFL footage in its advertisements).

Researchers have indicated that sponsorship associations can be an effective way of differentiating one brand from its competition (e.g., Cornwell, Roy, & Steinard, 2001; Gwinner & Eaton, 1999; Irwin, et. al., 2003; Stipp & Schiavone, 1996). And, perhaps, most importantly, several researchers have even indicated that achieving a brand association transfer through sponsorship strategies could potentially influence consumer behavior, including an increase in purchasing the products of the sponsoring brand (e.g., Cornwell & Maignan, 1998; Cornwell, et. al., 2001; Dean, 2002; Harvey, 2001; Madrigal, 2000; Meenaghan, 2001; Miyazaki & Morgan, 2001). In examining college football fans, Madrigal (2000) points out that fan identification did extend from support of a team to support of companies that sponsor and are associated with that team. He states, “loyalty toward a preferred team may have beneficial consequences for corporate sponsors. Consistent with the idea of in-group favoritism, higher levels of team identification among attendees of a sporting event appear to be positively related to intentions to purchase a sponsor’s products” (p. 21). Harvey (2001) adds “sponsorship changes the consumer’s perception of a specific sponsor – which can rub off positively on brands that sponsor in terms of willingness to purchase those brands” (p. 64). Amato, Peters, and Shao (2005) found that NASCAR fans consciously make the decision to support and purchase the products of its sponsors. Other researchers have even found that sports sponsorships can enhance the stock price of the sponsoring corporation (e.g., Miyazaki & Morgan, 2001; Pruitt, Cornwell, & Clark, 2004).

That said, sponsorship is often only one component of a larger promotional communication strategy of a company. Researchers claim the best practice is to integrate event sponsorship and other forms of advertising and while each promo-

tional communication method has its own specific strength, all advertising methods ultimately have the same goals (e.g., Cornwell & Maignan, 1998; O'Guinn, et. al., 2006; Quester & Thompson, 2001; Shrimp, 2003; Smolianov & Shilbury, 2005; Walliser, 2003). O'Guinn et. al., (2006) explain that "when marketers combine contests, a Web site, event sponsorship, and point-of-purchase displays with advertising, this creates an integrated brand promotion" (p. 12). Traditionally an integrated approach for sports properties meant a sponsorship agreement includes the purchase of broadcast commercial time (e.g., Fortunato, 2001). Buying commercial time is often, in fact, a necessary condition to becoming a league-wide sponsor. "For example, if Gatorade wanted to be the official sports drink of the NBA and have players drinking out of green cups with the Gatorade logo on them, Gatorade also had to buy commercial time on NBA television broadcasts" (Fortunato, 2001, p. 78). This integrated approach now includes the Internet and all forms of digital media.

In some aspects sports sponsorship has to be integrated, and not solely in digital media. An initial contractual agreement between the sponsor and the sports property still needs to be established to acquire content and logo rights and to have the league or team's footage be available on a digital media platform. Sports leagues might be resistant to completely altering the traditional television advertising environment as television remains the most lucrative revenue source for the most prominent sports leagues (e.g., Fortunato, 2001). For instance, in 2006 the NFL reached broadcast agreements with CBS, Fox, NBC, ESPN, and Direct-TV that pay the NFL revenue totaling over \$3.75 billion per season.

The way people experience sports is also relevant to any evaluation of the advertising environment in this area. Experiencing sports continues to be driven by watching a game live on television. In describing the emotion of the sports fan, Wenner and Gantz (1998) claim the unknown outcome of the game is the motivation that generates the most

interest and drives the behavior of watching. They point out the strongest motivation for watching sports on television deals with the resolution of ambiguity and identification with competitors, stating, "concerns with seeing 'who wins' and how one's 'favorite does' are among the strongest individual motivations for sports viewing. These tend to combine with the enjoyment that comes with experiencing the 'drama and tension' and the excitement of 'rooting' for a player or team to win" (p. 236). For sports, the outcome is unknown and fans can see the unscripted drama unfold live on television. The Super Bowl is arguably the greatest spectacle in American sports, and in some aspects for the field of advertising as well, viewed by more people every year than any other television program. Super Bowl XLIV played on February 7, 2010, between the New Orleans Saints and the Indianapolis Colts was the most-watched program in television history with an estimated average 106.5 million viewers (Best, 2010). Anheuser-Busch is the official, exclusive sponsor of the broadcast of the Super Bowl having reached agreements with all of the networks televising the game through 2011. The idea of sports leagues, and therefore advertisers, not having a presence on television still seems to be in the distant future.

EXTENDING SPORTS SPONSORSHIP TO DIGITAL MEDIA

For these reasons, the use of digital media has not replaced traditional advertising on sports events or traditional sponsorship strategies. However, once the relationship is established between the sponsor and the sports property it simply makes sense to establish an integrated promotional communication approach and to pull through all communication vehicles, including digital media. It is undeniable that digital media are already providing and will continue to offer an additional and valuable communication vehicle to connect with a highly desired target audience.

The advantageous characteristics of a sponsorship: negotiation of terms, exclusivity eliminating competition within a product category, and communication of association through the use of content or a logo, are all now extended to digital media initiatives. Just as sponsoring any team or league allows for the use of their logo on product packaging, the sponsorship allows for the sponsor's logo to appear on that league or team website. In many instances it is more than the appearance of the logo, but rather some interactive feature that is presented to online visitors, such as being linked to the company's website by clicking on the corporate logo or a longer form advertisement on the website using that league or team imagery to better communicate the brand association between the company and the property.

For example, on the New York Giants website, www.nygiants.com, the fan poll, which contains simple questions such as "how far will the Giants go this season," is presented by Dunkin Donuts with its logo clearly displayed. Beneath the response choices of the poll is a link to "view the Dunkin Donuts Joe 'The Cup' Dunkin Giants movie." This two minute, ten second video opens with Dunkin Donuts stadium signage and the plot has the main character, Joe "The Cup" Dunkin, being asked to kick the game winning field goal for the Giants. Joe "The Cup" Dunkin wears a Giants football helmet, but his uniform is a Dunkin Donuts cup. The movie ends with the ball resting between an upright and the cross-bar of the goal post with viewers not knowing if the ball goes over the cross-bar for the game winning kick before flashing to a screen showing the Giants logo and the Dunkin Donuts logo with its slogan "America runs on Dunkin."

The area of sports advertising and sponsorship becomes tailor made for digital media in allowing for better participation and interactivity in a number of scenarios. The following examples demonstrate how companies are effectively combining the advantageous characteristics of a traditional sponsorship agreement with the

vehicles of digital media to provide an additional opportunity to promote their brands and potentially better connect with their customers.

SPRITE AND THE NBA

Sprite is the official soft drink sponsor of the NBA and is the presenting sponsor of the Dunk Contest during All-Star Weekend and the NBA Draft. On June 26, 2008, the NBA held its annual Draft of top collegiate and international players. Sprite used the traditional advertising methods of having signage at the location of the event, having commercials during the televised broadcast of the Draft on ESPN, having it mentioned by announcers during the broadcast that the NBA Draft was presented by Sprite, having it mentioned as the presenting sponsor in other broadcast outlets such as ESPN's SportsCenter, and having the Sprite logo appear in the official logo of the NBA Draft which was prominently displayed on the NBA and ESPN website.

In addition to this brand exposure there were extensive online endeavors coordinated between the NBA and Sprite. On the NBA website (www.nba.com) visitors on the day of the Draft went directly to what had been the NBA's Draft page (www.nba.com/draft2008/index.html). This opening page featured a picture of NBA stars Yao Ming and LeBron James on their respective Draft nights, various article links providing extensive coverage of the NBA Draft, and a banner headline that indicated the Draft was presented by Sprite with the official NBA Draft 2008 logo that included the Sprite logo. The website also featured the Sprite Fan Blog, where fans throughout the day could chat about Draft happenings, and the Sprite Draft Pick 'Em Challenge (www.nba.com/draft2008/nbapickem/home.jsp). In the Sprite Draft Pick 'Em Challenge contest fans predicted which players would be the top fourteen selected in the Draft with points being awarded based on the correct responses. The grand prize was a trip to the 2009

NBA All-Star Game in Phoenix. Two runner-up prizes were a \$500 and a \$100 gift card for the NBA's online store (www.nbastore.com).

The NBA benefited from this Draft contest sponsored by Sprite as participation required a person had to sign up online to be an NBA Fan Center Member and receive NBA All-Access materials (www.nba.com/allaccess/main.html). During registration a person would provide his or her demographic information and set up to receive e-mails from the league that featured weekly or daily headlines, merchandise discounts, ticket offers, or fantasy news. Once online registration was complete fans were sent a welcome to NBA All-Access e-mail that included 15 percent off your next purchase at the NBA's online store. The NBA Draft has long-been a marketing opportunity for the league beyond introducing its future stars (e.g., Fortunato, 2001). Once a player is selected at the Draft he is given the team's hat. Within one hour of the beginning of the 2008 Draft, NBA All-Access members received an e-mail offer to "get the same hat worn by the draftees of the 2008 NBA Draft" by going to nbastore.com. The e-mail also indicated "this message was sent to you because you subscribed to NBA offers e-mails."

Beyond the Draft, Sprite has furthered its association with the NBA by having extensive dealings with one of the league's preeminent stars, LeBron James. In 2003, James signed a six-year contract with Sprite. He has appeared in Sprite advertisements and his image has been on select cans of Sprite. In January 2007, Sprite introduced a new promotion as part of its subLYMONal campaign that invited consumers to create an exclusive theme song for LeBron James that would be part of the new LeBron23-23 promotion. At a newly created Lebron23-23.com website, fans had the opportunity to create their own music mix that could become the LeBron James theme song. The music tracks were posted on the website and visitors could vote for their favorite songs. During the voting period the music tracks, as well as video clips of LeBron James playing and subLY-

MONal images were posted on NBA.com/2323. Fans could choose their favorite LeBron James video clips and music mixes and combine them in creating their own music videos that they could digitally share with their friends.

At the end of the preliminary voting period, an expert panel reviewed the top 100 vote-getters and selected the best 23 music tracks. Of those 23 music track James, along with hip hop artists, Paul Wall and Al Fatz, selected the top three finalists. During the 2007 NBA All Star Weekend in Las Vegas, James and Sprite hosted an event at the Bellagio Hotel to unveil a new LeBron subLYMONal advertisement, announce the three finalists, and debut their music tracks. On February 17, the advertisement with the three different music tracks debuted on NBA All Star television programming with viewers prompted to vote up until March 2 for their favorite track through text messaging or visiting Lebron23-23.com. The winner of this fan voting would also get to join Paul Wall and Al Fatz in the studio to finish producing what would become LeBron James' theme song. Finally, during the promotion from January 1 through January 22, consumers could enter codes found under caps of specially marked bottles of Sprite and Sprite Zero at Lebron23-23.com and have a chance to win one of 23 prizes that included a signed LeBron James jersey, video iPods, and portable AM/FM stereo/CD players (http://nba.com/news/Lebron_song_070105.html).

In addition to these efforts, Sprite has a presence in the videogame *NBA Ballers: Phenom* for the Xbox and PlayStation 2 entertainment systems. *NBA Ballers: Phenom* is set in the neighborhoods of Los Angeles with the player controlling his or her own future in trying to become the next NBA phenomenon. Players can chart their own on-the-court and off-the-court future by deciding to either follow the Baller's dream of getting noticed as a basketball player and drafted into the NBA or choose to become a business mogul off-the-court by developing a clothing line, record label, or a movie deal. Sarah McIlroy, director of

in-game advertising and promotions for Midway Amusement Games, stated, “one of Midway’s core in-game advertising strategies is to infuse games with cultural context and relevance through the integration of in-game product placements. The addition of key consumer brands such as Sprite, T-Mobile, and Spalding make the gameplay experience in *NBA Ballers: Phenom* organic and credible. We are very excited to be able to work with these companies and to give their brands the type of outreach and exposure that only interactive games can offer” (Midway Games Inc. Press Release, May 2, 2006; www.midway.com/us/mpr_4256.html).

Finally, the Sprite brand only represents one association between the NBA and Sprite’s parent company, Coca-Cola. Since 1986, Coca-Cola and the NBA have been global marketing partners. The partnership includes digital initiatives such as The Finals Real Time, which provides fans photo and text updates to their wireless phones, or iCoke China, which offers exclusive content to its members in China. It is important to point out that these digital initiatives are supported with traditional advertising and sponsorship. Coca-Cola was a sponsor of the NBA Europe Live presented by EA Sports in 2006 and 2007 that featured four NBA teams conducting training camp in Europe and playing exhibition games against European teams in seven cities. Coca-Cola and its Sprite brand also support NBA events in several countries including China, Germany, Mexico, and Canada and have advertisements that appear in NBA international telecasts in 215 countries and 46 languages (www.nba.com/news/coca-cola_060616.html).

VERIZON AND THE NFL

In March, 2010, Verizon Wireless became the official wireless service of the NFL with a four-year deal estimated at a total of \$720 million. Verizon replaced Sprint who was paying the NFL

approximately \$120 million per year (Ourand & Lefton, 2010). Through this sponsorship agreement Verizon offers its customers exclusive NFL content. The simple hope for Verizon is that this exclusive content will help attract and retain customers.

Through this sponsorship agreement the available programming through select mobile phones includes live streaming of NBC’s Sunday Night Football games and the games on the NFL Network, the NFL RedZone Channel, which airs live look-ins of every key play and touchdown from Sunday afternoon games, and the NFL Network Channel. Other features of NFL Mobile on Verizon Wireless include: live streaming of the NFL Draft, live audio broadcasts of every regular season and playoff game, game highlights and an extensive collection of on-demand video featuring analysis and inside access from NFL Network and NFL Films. NFL Mobile from Verizon also allows for personalization and customization of content, including team or player alerts, ringtones, graphics, and fantasy information and statistics (NFL press releases, March 22, 2010, <http://www.nfl.com/news/author?id=09000d5d8142ac0e>). John Stratton, executive vice president and chief marketing officer for Verizon Wireless, stated, “this is an agreement that has, at its core, a mutual desire by both the NFL and Verizon Wireless to provide consumers with what they want on and off the field.” Brian Rolapp, NFL senior vice president of media strategy, commented, “our fans have an insatiable appetite for football, and we will be able to keep them connected wherever they are on game day, but also throughout the year” (NFL press releases, March 22, 2010, <http://www.nfl.com/news/author?id=09000d5d8142ac0e>).

The individual NFL teams are still able to make their own telecommunication deals with wireless providers, which could include other programming such as coaches’ shows as content. Verizon has sponsorship deals with fifteen NFL teams (Ourand & Lefton, 2010).

AT&T AND THE MASTERS GOLF TOURNAMENT

The Masters is one of the four annual major golf tournaments along with the United States Open, British Open, and PGA Championship. In 2008, the Masters Golf Tournament had its first two rounds televised on ESPN and its final two rounds televised on CBS. Direct-TV also featured four separate channels free for its subscribers: one channel showed the ESPN or CBS feed, the second was a highlight channel showing continuous coverage of that day's golf action, the third channel featured the action taking place live at Amen Corner, the famed 11th, 12th, and 13th holes of Augusta National, and the fourth channel showed live coverage of the 15th and 16th holes. In its broadcasts on ESPN and CBS in 2008, the Masters Golf Tournament coverage once again featured its long-standing tradition of having 56 minutes of every hour showing golf action, with only four minutes reserved for commercials.

Another long-standing policy of the Masters is that it only has two or three sponsors to avoid any advertising clutter. AT&T was one of the primary sponsors of the 2008 Masters Golf Tournament along with ExxonMobil and IBM. Each sponsor has its logo present on the Masters website (www.masters.org) and clicking on the logo leads the visitor directly to that company's website. In 2008 the Masters offered the audience three ways to visually experience the tournament: television, personal computer, and wireless device.

In 2008 content involving the Masters Golf Tournament was available through many AT&T media platforms. In addition to the ESPN and CBS television coverage AT&T customers through AT&T U-verse TV, AT&T Broadband TV, AT&T Mobile, as well as visitors online to the AT&T blue room, www.attblueroom.com/sports/events/masters.php, were able to access daily highlights and player interviews, a live feed of the Par 3 contest on the Wednesday before the start of the tournament, Masters Extra, one hour of live golf

action before CBS or ESPN began their coverage, Amen Corner Live, and live coverage of the 15th and 16th holes. AT&T blue room visitors could also watch archived Masters Moments, a series of 24 highlight packages that showed past Masters tournaments, and daily coverage of the Masters driving range. Dan York, AT&T Entertainment Services head of content and programming, commented, "consumers today crave connectivity. They want to be able to access great content no matter where they are. Through our agreement with the Masters, we're able to deliver even more iconic footage to more people in more places than ever before" (April 2, 2008, AT&T Press Release, www.attblueroom.com/pressreleases).

WISE FOODS AND THE BOSTON RED SOX (DAVID ORTIZ)

WISE FOODS AND THE NEW YORK METS (JOSE REYES)

Wise Foods Incorporated produces potato chips, cheese doodles, and an assortment of other snack foods and has its products available in 20 of the eastern United States and Washington D. C.. Wise Foods is an official sponsor of the Boston Red Sox and New York Mets and has signage on the outfield wall at both Fenway Park in Boston and Citi Field in New York. Wise Foods also has a sponsorship agreement with one of each teams' star players, David Ortiz of the Red Sox and Jose Reyes of the Mets. As an official sponsor of both the team and the players in this specific example, Ortiz and Reyes appear on Wise product packaging in their respective team's uniform (by contrast, while Pepsi and its Aquafina bottled water brand are official sponsors of the New York Mets, David Wright, Mets all-star third baseman, has his own sponsorship deal with Aquafina competitor, Vitamin Water. In any advertisements for Vitamin Water, Wright cannot be seen wearing a Mets hat

or uniform, but rather a generic baseball uniform).

On the front of the Wise product packages that feature a photo of Ortiz or Reyes there is a website for each player: www.wisesnacksquad.com/ortiz or www.wisesnacksquad.com/reyes. At these respective websites fans learn about the Wise Snack Squad, a traveling promotional caravan that made 18 visits to different locations in both the Boston and New York area in May and June of 2008. The website provided the Wise Snack Squad location appearance schedule. For instance, the Wise Snack Squad appeared at the specific location from 12:00 p.m., to 6:00 p.m., and finding it in Boston could lead to winning prizes such as Red Sox tickets, a meet-and-greet with David Ortiz, watching batting practice on the field at Fenway Park, or a road trip to see the Red Sox play the Yankees in New York. Finding the Wise Snack Squad in the New York area could lead to winning prizes such as Mets tickets, a meet-and-greet with Jose Reyes that included watching him take batting practice, throwing out the first pitch at a Mets game before watching that day's game from a luxury suite with 14 friends, or a road trip to see the Mets play the Phillies in Philadelphia.

Each website for the respective player also featured a "Swing for the Fences Home Run Derby" game. After providing general customer information, fans can play the online home run derby game acting as either Ortiz or Reyes, depending on which player's Wise Snack Squad website they visited. The video game stadium featured the centerfield scoreboard with a large Wise Foods logo surrounded by stadium like signage of Wise Foods potato chip and cheese doodle packages. Fans who sign up for the home run derby game are also eligible to win similar prizes as those who found the Wise Snack Squad.

ESPN

Sponsors not only have the option of associating with leagues, teams, or players, but media outlets

that cover sports and are a destination for the sports audience certainly become a fruitful opportunity for advertisers to reach a desired demographic and incorporate digital media strategies. While companies have their own websites, they are not as popular as the websites of these sports leagues, teams, or a media outlet that offer valuable communication vehicles for brand exposure. No sports media entity is more prominent than ESPN. According to a Brand Research Study by Keleman and Associates Inc., ESPN has 97 percent brand awareness, is the number one media brand in sports, and is the number four leading name in sports, trailing only the NFL, Nike, and the NBA (ESPN Sales Media Kit, www.espncoms.com). An SRI Knowledge Networks survey found that over 102 million people use an ESPN property in an average week, with 57% of men and 81% of avid sports fans using ESPN media, and 25 percent of all media time consumed by avid sports fans with an ESPN property (ESPN Sales Media Kit, www.espncoms.com). The mission statement for ESPN is "to serve sports fans whenever sports are watched, listened to, discussed, read about or played" (ESPN Sales Media Kit, www.espncoms.com). Beginning with the television network in 1979, ESPN now features multiple television networks (ESPN2, ESPN Classic, ESPN News, ESPNU, and ESPN Deportes), ESPN the Magazine, ESPN Radio, and several Internet and mobile offerings. The ESPN brand also has 34 international networks and distributes programming to 194 countries in sixteen different languages.

The ESPN empire still begins with the flagship network which earns approximately \$4.00 per month from cable operators for the right to make the network available to their customers on their cable systems (Ourand, 2009). ESPN has the broadcast rights to the NFL, NBA, Major League Baseball, early round coverage of the Masters and golf's U.S. Open, tennis tournaments (including coverage of all four majors: Wimbledon, U.S. Open, French Open, and Australian Open), college football (including the Bowl Championship Series

games starting in 2011), college basketball, the college baseball World Series, and the X Games.

ESPN Radio has 725 affiliates and 325 branded affiliates that generate over an average of 20 million listeners per week. Over 55 percent of all sports radio listeners listen to an ESPN affiliate (Arbitron Nationwide DMA, ESPN Sales Media Kit, www.espncoms.com). Most prominent on the radio network is the *Mike and Mike in the Morning* program (with hosts Mike Greenberg and former NFL player Mike Golic) which is also simulcast on ESPN2 and interviews from the show are archived on the ESPN website. ESPN the Magazine has over 14.6 million readers with a median age of 31.8 and a media income of \$65,471. The magazine has seen its audience grow 17 percent from Spring 2007 to Spring 2008, with an over 130,000 audience increase in the male 18 to 34 demographic (ESPN Sales Media Kit, www.espncoms.com).

In its digital media offerings ESPN's online website, www.espn.com, averages over 20 million monthly unique visitors and now represents the largest community of online sports fans, leading Yahoo! Sports by approximately half-million users (Comscore Media Metrix, rolling two month average, ESPN Sales Media Kit, www.espncoms.com). ESPN online ranked number one in male composition and in 2007 1.2 billion videos were served and ESPN Fantasy had 3.2 billion page views with an average of 2.7 million unique users and 58 minutes per use. Online advertising opportunities include in-page video presentation, sponsorship of event sites, polls or scoreboards, rich media between page views including in a full screen format, and affiliation with fantasy contests, such as the NCAA Men's college basketball "Tournament Challenge." ESPN online also features an ESPN Insider program where subscribers receive exclusive content and ESPN 360, which features live sports online with up to ten games being broadcast simultaneously and viewers having the ability to pause, fast-forward, or rewind action and replay games for up to 48

hours after the event. Finally, ESPN Mobile has six million unique users and is the number one sports mobile website. It allows for advertising opportunities such as banners, sponsored links, or sponsored polls. ESPN Podcast has over eight million monthly downloads, with sponsorship opportunities including lead-ins to ESPN programming such as *Best of Mike and Mike*, *Pardon the Interruption*, and *Around the Horn*.

Companies sponsor with ESPN in a variety of ways with many using an integrated approach to reaching the audience through many of its communication touch points, including ESPN digital media. Pontiac Game Changing Performance represented one example of how a sponsor can coordinate its activities with ESPN. In this sponsorship deal fans went online and viewed the nominated plays and voted for their favorite college football Game Changing Performance. The nominees each week were reviewed on ESPN's College Gameday Program (which incidentally is "Built by the Home Depot") by announcers Lee Corso and Kirk Herbstreit and fans were invited to log onto the website and vote for their favorite play (www.espn.com/pontiac). The school responsible for the play selected by the fans in that given week was awarded a contribution to its general scholarship fund. That play was then included in voting at the end of the season for the Pontiac Game Changing Performance of the Year, with the school selected receiving an even more substantial award from Pontiac for its general scholarship fund.

There are multiple contests that companies sponsor through the ESPN brand. On the ESPN website there is heading for a link to all the contests. One such contest was ESPN's The Road to TitleTown presented by Wendy's. In the spring of 2008 fans nominated cities across the United States and argued their championship credentials. Twenty finalists were chosen and ESPN's SportsCenter visited each of those cities during July. The highlight package of each city was broadcast during SportsCenter and featured footage of that cities

teams championship moments and interviews with prominent athletes of the city explaining why their city was indeed TitleTown USA (i.e., Derek Jeter, Yankees all-star shortstop, in the New York segment and Tim Tebow, University of Florida 2007 Heisman Trophy winning quarterback, in the Gainesville, Florida segment). Voting fans were also eligible to win a grand prize of a trip to any TitleTown finalist city.

At the main website for this promotion (<http://promo.espn.go.com/espn/contests/wendys/>), Wendy's had banner advertisements that featured a display of hamburgers and the slogan "Wendy's fresh, never frozen beef is waaaay better." Wendy's also had a store locator and clicking on to its logo on the ESPN website brought the visitor directly to the Wendy's website (www.wendys.com). There was also a pull down menu where fans can learn about each TitleTown city as well as view that cities feature that was televised on SportsCenter.

SUMMARY

Examples presented throughout this chapter reveal how some companies are incorporating digital media into their advertising and sponsorship in the area of sports. In addition to brand exposure, the opportunity for exclusivity within a product category and developing an association with a popular sports property continue to make sponsorship a viable promotional communication strategy. It is also clear that combining these characteristics with the capabilities of digital media can create a more powerful brand/consumer interaction and relationship. However, it should be understood that digital media do not replace traditional forms of sports advertising and sponsorship, but rather represent additional opportunities for advertising and marketing personnel to pursue. There still needs to be an initial agreement between the company and the property because the usage of content and logos whose rights are initially held by the league, team, or event is not possible without an

agreement with the sports property. AT&T does not get to distribute the Masters Golf Tournament content or Verizon offer NFL content through their various digital media platforms without being official sponsors of those properties. In each of these examples digital media are only one part of a larger, more comprehensive advertising strategy that includes promotion through other media vehicles, including broadcast commercials during the live televised game, as well as face-to-face interactions with the brand.

Once a sponsorship agreement is reached an integrated promotional communication approach can be established. Sponsors can then use all media vehicles to promote their brands and potentially better connect with their customers. Just as negotiation makes anything possible in a more traditional sponsorship, digital media advertising in sports is only limited by what the creative personnel can develop and the parameters of what can contractually be agreed upon between the sponsor and the sports property. These examples are but a mere sampling of the many interesting and unique strategies that advertisers are executing in the area of sports and digital media. Future research on the subject of sponsors' use of digital media in the area of sports will provide more examples of how companies are using this technology and incorporating it into their promotional communication strategies.

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