Octagon Golf and the 2010 ACE Group Classic: A Case in Sport Marketing Alternatives

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Traditional marketing techniques (i.e., newspaper or television advertisements) have struggled to keep up with the changes in media and advertising, which has decreased the connection with the consumer (Calder & Malthouse, 2005). Additionally, data suggest there has been a dramatic decline in recent newspaper circulation and advertising expenditures (NAA, 2009). However, considering the decreased effectiveness of traditional media marketing, little is known about what sport event marketers have done to implement non-traditional marketing options.

As the internet has become more prevalent in consumer searches, the sport event website has emerged as a primary source for consumers’ information needs, establishing itself as a practical resource for both marketing and communications (Filo et al., 2009). In addition to the sport event website, sport event organizations have begun to consider internet-driven social media sites (e.g., Facebook and Twitter) as marketing alternatives (Foux, 2006; Lempert, 2006; Mangold & Faulds, 2009). This medium, because of its growing popularity among internet and mobile-technology users, can be used to communicate event-specific information to customers in an attempt to increase word-of-mouth marketing (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Similar to social media, short message service (SMS) marketing has begun to rise in popularity because of the increase in mobile technology and text messaging (CTIA, 2009). Advantageous to sport marketers, SMS marketing communicates with consumers in an informal way that has become an everyday activity for most target markets (Scharl, Dickinger & Murphy, 2005).

While technology-based alternatives like the sport event website (Filo & Funk, 2005; Filo, Funk & Hornby, 2009), social media sites like Facebook and Twitter (Foux, 2006; Lempert, 2006; Mangold & Faulds, 2009), and Short Message Service (SMS) communication (Jensen & Jepsen, 2007) offer sport event organizations potential solutions, the potential role each alternative is not well-known. Therefore, this case study attempted to further understand the use of these alternative channels in the marketing of the 2010 ACE Group Classic, managed by Octagon Golf. The informational requirements proposed by Filo, Funk and Hornby (2009) were used to evaluate the content of the event website. Additionally, the Psychological Continuum Model (PCM) was used to provide a theoretical framework for a consumer’s psychological connection with the sport event (Funk & James, 2001). The PCM was used to understand how the content of each marketing alternative can facilitate the psychological relationship between an individual consumer and the 2010 ACE Group Classic. This was the first time known to the researchers that the PCM model has been used to directly evaluate the use of non-traditional marketing methods on the connection between a consumer and a sport event.

This evaluation identified a number of strengths and weakness for Octagon Golf’s use of non-traditional marketing methods for the 2010 ACE Group Classic. First, Octagon did provide a variety of different information and entertainment points to help facilitate an individual consumers’ movement through the levels of the PCM. Second, although a number of components were included, the event website was missing eight informational requirements outlined by Filo, Funk and Hornby (2009). Third, there were additional opportunities available via these non-traditional marketing methods that could help increase awareness and provide exclusive promotions.