How to Work with Industry Professionals to Achieve Marketing Objectives and Academic Research Goals

Noah Tierney, Seattle University
Susan Salem, Seattle University
Galen Trail (Advisor), Seattle University
Chris Longhurst, Washington Stealth

Marketing Friday, May 25, 2012

Abstract 2012-217 2:00 PM

The objective of presenting this symposium is to show how academics, students, and practitioners within sport organizations can work together to build better relationships and accomplish multiple goals. Specifically, we will discuss how academics can provide valuable services to practitioners that are guided by theory and prior research, gather data to further the academician’s research goals, and incorporate students into the project to meet university and department objectives.

The first speaker will discuss how the Washington Stealth (professional box lacrosse) contacted the Sport Administration and Leadership program (MSAL) at Seattle University expressing interest in having some consulting done for them. The Stealth’s initial objectives were somewhat general; wanting to know what impacted attendance and media consumption. Several students were recruited to help in the project and a meeting was set up with the Stealth. The following more specific objectives were proposed based on existing theory and prior research:

- i. Determine awareness and interest of general public in the Greater Seattle Area
- ii. Suggest new target markets based on psychographics rather than demographics, and then examine the following on each segment
- iii. Determine effectiveness of advertising and promotions
- iv. Identify consumption behaviors of Stealth Spectators
- v. Identify what motivates and/or constrains spectators on attendance
- vi. Identify whether social media impacted future attendance and what motivators and/or past behaviors affected social media consumption.
- vii. Generate suggestions on how to increase attendance and reduce barriers to attendance
- viii. Recommend specific actions to incorporate social media into the overall communications/marketing plans

The second and third speakers will discuss how theory and prior research guided the consulting and research. It is estimated that there are 200 million sports fans in America, and that they spend over $32 billion on teams at sporting events, which is just a small part of the $213 billion sporting industry (Trail & James, 2010). It is important to understand these fans behaviors to better maximize advertising, promotions and profit. So far there has been little study of sport fan behavior and social media usage. To guide our research and achieve the above objectives, we used the model proposed by Trail and James (2011). This model is based on the prior work of Trail and colleagues and is also guided by the following theories: self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2008), Means-End-Chain Theory (MEC - Gutman, 1982), attitude theory (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993), the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991), self-esteem theory (Cast & Burke, 2002), and satisfaction theory (Oliver, 1977). Specifically, in this model Trail and James suggest that internal aspects such as motivators interact with external aspects (activation) to predict attitudes toward a product. These attitudes influence intention and then initial product purchase. The consumers’ expectancies are either confirmed or disconfirmed based on the consumption experience. This leads to satisfaction and then self-esteem building or maintenance behaviors (Basking in Reflected Glory – BIRGing or Cutting Off Reflected Failure – CORFing). These behaviors in turn lead to repatronage behaviors. This model has been developed...
to predict conative loyalty (future attendance behavior) primarily and has not been used to address social media usage per se. However, the use of the model would allow objectives #3-5 to be assessed.

Social media has been in the forefront of research lately for good reason. In March 2011, there were 272,066,000 internet users in North America (Minniwats Marketing Group, 2011). A major part of the internet is social media, which has become big business. In 2011, social media is expected to generate $10.3 billion, $14.9 billion in 2012 and $21.1 billion in the 2015 (Gaudin, 2011). The numbers behind social media usage is even more impressive. According to Facebook’s statistics page there are more than 800 million active users (Statistics). Twitter, another continually growing social media platform, has over 200 million active users (Search Engine Journal, 2011). Not only is there a large audience on the internet but it has been shown to have strengthened self esteem and social identification more than newspapers, broadcast and cell phones among sport fans (Phua, 2010). Social media is a valuable marketing tool, as such, it is important that sports teams understand what draws fans to accessing the teams website, Facebook page, and Twitter account. Thus we proposed to use the Trail and James (2011) model incorporating past attendance experiences and levels of loyalty to see what if any predictive value they had and also to examine the relationship between social media usage and repatronage intentions. This would hopefully allow us to achieve the aforementioned objectives relative to social media.

The first speaker will come back and discuss the methods of the research project and how both entities worked together to make sure all objectives were met.

a. Based on the objectives and the measures representing the constructs in the model, a student and the faculty member created the survey for the Stealth. However, the Stealth did not want a long survey, so after much negotiation, the number of items per scale was limited to one rather than the typical multi-items scales used in prior research.

b. Two separate, distinct data collections were gathered. The first was an online survey (created by a couple of students and a faculty member) of the general public in the Greater Seattle area focusing on awareness and interest of greater Seattle area sports teams, of which the Stealth was one. It was an on-going survey and we had 328 responses when the data was analyzed for the Stealth’s purposes.

c. The second data set was collected by six students and one faculty member during the final home game of the 2010-2011 Washington Stealth season; 500 surveys were randomly passed out to participants over the age of 18. After halftime, volunteers collected the surveys. Of the 500 handed out, 380 were usable giving a return rate of 76%.

d. Analyzing data:

i. To achieve objective #1, general descriptive data were calculated from the first data set which indicated that 54% of the general public surveyed was not aware of the Stealth and an additional 29% were not interested. The Stealth also had the lowest Awareness coefficient of any of the 13 teams.

ii. To achieve objective #2, we did a cluster analysis on the motives of attendee data and determined that five general segments existed: Loyal Fans (35%), General Sport Fans (30%), Indoor Lacrosse Fans (15%), Casuals (14%), and Paul Rabil Fans (the best player on the Stealth - 6%).

iii. We then used the models described in the previous section to guide our analysis and achieve objectives #3-6 for each segment.

Speakers two and three will discuss the results and recommendations. Two students and one faculty member created two Market Analysis reports in which we made multitudinous recommendations to the Stealth. We met with the Stealth and gave them the presentation on the results and recommendations. For the purpose of this symposium we are only listing the following nine. The actual recommendations will be discussed in the symposium but due to space constraints are not included here. 1. Increasing awareness and interest in the general public in the greater Seattle area, 2. Increasing attendance in the Casuals’ segment, 3. Increasing attendance in the General Fans segment, 4. Increasing attendance in the Indoor Lacrosse fan segment, 5. Increasing Facebook usage by Loyal Fans, 6. Increasing Facebook usage of Indoor Lacrosse fans, 7. Increasing Facebook usage by the Rabil Fans segment, 8.
Increasing Website usage by General fans, 9. Increasing Website usage by Rabil fans.

In this next section of the symposium speaker four (an employee of the Stealth) discusses how and whether the recommendations were implemented by the Stealth. In the final section of the symposium we hope to present an assessment of the implementation of the recommendations after the 2011-2012 season. Questions from the audience will be accepted at any point during the presentation.