Introduction

Sport promotion has a profound impact on the way sport products and services are communicated and consumed. Promotion represents only one aspect of the sport marketing mix but it receives considerable attention both internally and externally. Internally, sport managers can use promotion as an integrated strategy to develop content and distribute information to potential and current customers about product, price, place, sponsorship and service. The strategy is designed to communicate attractive attributes and benefits of products and services to stimulate awareness and interest for new consumers and facilitate stronger emotional connections among existing consumers. Externally, sport organizations have less control over content and distribution of communication and must use intermediaries such as the mass media as a platform for promotion.

Sport organizations receive a great deal of media coverage, which plays a dominant role in shaping opinions about the organization as well as the products and services they offer. This chapter will focus on the external aspect of sport promotion as a mass communication strategy. In other words, sport promotion that utilizes mass media to inform and influence current and potential customers as well as the general public. This perspective links sport promotion with mass communication to help understand how sport managers can use the mass media as a communication vehicle. Topics to be covered within this chapter include promotion as a mass media strategy, sport mass communication as promotion, sport broadcast rights, the influence of sport editorials, the role of media coverage on live sport attendance, new media and sport, and considerations of the future effects of technology on sport promotion.

Promotion as a mass media communication strategy

The external positioning of the sport product or service will rely upon communication strategies that the sport organization employs to spread information to the outside world. The outside world includes a range of stakeholders including consumers and users, members of the community, potential employees, sponsors, suppliers of services and materials, distributors, opinion leaders and media companies. Hence, an important and useful communication strategy that includes a subset of promotion is public relations. Public relations within the
marketing mix can include both community and media relations (Mullin, Hardy and Sutton, 2007) and is designed to help shape public opinion and behavior towards brands, services, issues and people (Baskin, Aronoff and Lattimore, 1997). Hence, sport promotion can be viewed as a communication strategy that employs mass communication.

There is widespread acknowledgement that mass communication influences attitudes and behavior because individuals learn and share information through communication. Communication can take various forms, but all involve the sending and receiving of a message. In general, individuals spend considerable amounts of time each day dealing with communication ranging from interpersonal and group exchanges among friends, family and co-workers to mass communication experiences involving electronic and print media, advertising and public lectures. Hence, the communication of ideas and feelings within a culture serve to both educate and persuade at the individual and societal level. Although interpersonal communication is important, the focus of this chapter will be on the role of mass communication and the influence on the individual sport consumer. Mass media operates as an important communication vehicle to directly and indirectly influence both adolescents and adults. In a meta-analysis of media research, Emmers-Sommer and Allen (1999) found that mass media becomes increasingly important in shaping the behavior of children as they mature. In addition, mass media remains an important force in shaping adult consumption activities (Bush, Smith and Martin, 1999; Trevino, Webster and Stein, 2000). As a result, sport informational content conveyed through mass media plays a dominant role in shaping attitudes and behavior among sport consumers from the cradle to the grave (Funk and James, 2001).

**Mass communication**

In general, mass communication can operate through two pathways: direct and indirect (Bandura, 2001). The direct pathway serves to inform, motivate, persuade and guide individuals to action. This pathway can be viewed as traditional promotions, including advertising, sales, sponsorship and licensing, that form a central part of the marketing mix framework for an organization (Mullin et al., 2007). The indirect pathway is a socially mediated pathway, where intermediaries such as the mass media, social networks and community settings inform and influence individuals.

The indirect pathway is of particular importance as the influence of mass communication on the individual, and by extension the general public, is widely recognized. In most developed technological societies, individuals access information and develop beliefs and opinions about events beyond their direct experience from messages presented to them through mass communication. For example, media coverage of a sport event (e.g., Olympics, World Cup, English Premier League (EPL) match) can influence public opinion by controlling what individuals know about the event in the absence of actual observation or firsthand knowledge (Bartels, 1993; Entman, 1989). Mass media can construct information in such a way that it promotes dominant group interests as normal, and influences what we think and feel about our social and political environment (Eitzen and Sage, 2003). Research indicates that individuals form impressions and opinions from information provided by a variety of sources, but intermediaries such as mass media, most notably television, newspapers, magazines, radio and internet, continue to play a dominant role (Dalton, Beck and Huckfeldt, 1998; Domke, 2001; Emmers-Sommer and Allen, 1999; Spiro, 2001).

Mass media’s influence on shaping individual attitudes, opinions and interests occurs through both sociological and psychological processes. The sociological processes account for
how various external forces interact with the individual during the process of socialization (e.g., Domke, 2001); in other words, how the individual learns norms, values, opinions and behavior from various socializing agents such as mass media, organizations and institutions, personalities and governmental agencies (e.g., Bush, Smith and Martin, 1999). Mass media operates as an important socializing agent as it can present information in such a manner that it influences how individuals think and feel about the social, cultural and political environment. The potential influence of mass media on the individual is governed by psychological processes that account for how informational content is framed and processed by the individual (Drew and Weaver, 1990; Schmidt, 1993).

This cognitive perspective highlights how the individual processing the mass media communication evaluates the content (e.g., news coverage, editorials, informational cues) based upon his or her current beliefs and opinions. For example, an individual’s prior attitude related to a news event (e.g., a sport event, sport team, coach or athlete) and direct experience related to the event would be used to evaluate the message and would determine the potential persuasiveness of the content (Dalton et al., 1998; Erickson, 1976). Taken together, both the sociological and psychological perspectives highlight the notion that “the media do not control what people prefer . . . they influence public opinion by providing much of the information people think about and shape how they think about it” (Entman, 1989: 361). Hence, there are compelling reasons to expect that mass media communication will have a substantial influence on the opinions and behavior of stakeholders and particular end consumers within the sport industry.

The influence of mass media communication on sport within society can also be highlighted by the dual role it has for sport promotion. The first role is the reporting of sport as news. This role involves the gathering of information for the purposes of editorial use and the use of photographs or video images to add context and depth to the reporting. The second role is the broadcasting of sport as entertainment. This role involves the purchase of exclusive rights from a sporting organization that provides some type of commercial benefit to the sporting organization, the broadcaster who holds the rights, and sponsors and advertisers of the sport or event. As a result, sport mass communication can play an important promotional role for a sport organization and must be managed accordingly.

**Sport mass communication as promotion**

Sport media emerged over 200 years ago as a sport section in daily newspapers was used to augment traditional news (Nichols, Moynahan, Hall and Taylor, 2002). The printed word of sport news dominated early delivery of sport content to large audiences and the sport section remains an important component of newspapers (Funk and Pritchard, 2006). Sport content can be distributed on paper in newspapers and magazines or electronically via the internet and wireless technologies. Sport content can also be broadcast and appeared in the 1920s through radio and later via television. This dramatically changed how sport was covered by the media. Currently, new media technologies are having a pronounced impact on sport mass communication. These developments transcend geographic boundaries, allowing sport fans to follow sport, teams and athletes from around the globe. Correspondingly, sport brands can promote themselves to a global audience through new media. In addition, new media technologies have introduced greater speed of communication as sport fans can now obtain scores, statistics and analysis both during and immediately following games. Sport-induced media companies are now more than ever viewing sport as a mass communication vehicle to increase profits by producing content to attract audiences and develop advertising revenue.
Sport mass communication involves a process whereby media organizations produce and transmit messages which are sought, used and consumed by sport audiences (Hall, Nichols, Moynahan, and Taylor, 2007). In general, sport mass communication is based on four basic characteristics: 1) the commercial nature of the communication in terms of the profit motive of media organizations to produce content which is used to attract audiences to develop advertising revenue; 2) the ability to reach either a heterogeneous and widely dispersed audience or a specific targeted group; 3) the ability to deliver content via written, audio or visual messages; and 4) the organizational source of the content (e.g., McQuail, 2010). These four characteristics determine the use of sport content by media organizations and, by extension, inform the use of sport mass communication as a promotional tool by the sport organization.

Wenner (1989) suggests that sport media provides various stakeholders with a shared sport culture that shapes a picture of what sport is and what it means to the individual and larger society. Mass media can serve to create general awareness of sport and related activities, as well as change existing knowledge and beliefs about the sport (Cavill and Bauman, 2004). The media’s coverage of a sport or sport event can provide insight into various sport subcultures that reinforce or change existing stereotypes (Bernstein, 2002; Wheaton and Beal, 2003). Hence, sport media can be used as a promotional vehicle and play an important role in shaping the meaning of sport and related activities to a wide spectrum of society.

The relationship between the media industry and sport industry is often viewed as symbiotic (Hall et al., 2007). In other words, each industry is unique but exists for mutual benefit. The mass media profit from the distribution of sport content as news and entertainment. The media organization receives programming and content to increase the number of viewers, listeners, readers, visitors and users, which ultimately provides advertising revenue (Schultz, 2005). This symbiotic relationship has the potential to create a dangerous liaison between the media and sport organizations. For example, the media can oversell a match between two teams or a potential clash between two opposing marquee players by using controversial and hyped terminology and images to create a fake rivalry in order to generate more attention and attract a larger audience. However, the relationship can also be used to promote the positive benefits and value of sport such as league, team, and player involvement in charities and contributions to communities.

The product of this relationship allows the sport organization to receive free publicity and exposure in the form of news coverage. In addition, the sport organization can receive revenue through the sale of broadcast and print rights and media partnerships. Based on this relationship, sport organizations that emphasize and understand the mass communication approach can utilize a number of promotional activities including news features, interviews, photos, news releases, opinion pieces, speeches, seminars, online forums, talk shows and promotional and special events.

Overall, these promotional activities are designed to utilize the influence of the mass media on the individual and community to educate and guide understanding of the sport organization and generate publicity for commercial products and services. As stated by Helitzer (2000), “the real talent is not the writing of publicity but the creation of publicity” (p. 205). In addition, electronic broadcast and media rights represent a substantial revenue source for sport organizations. Although some professional sport teams and leagues have implemented strategies such as creating their own local TV and radio channels or producing talk shows in-house to avoid or lessen the reliance on media companies (e.g., New York Yankees), the vast majority do not have the capacity to manage the complexity of the mass
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media process. Hence, sport managers must understand the link between audience, ratings and broadcast functions to better employ promotional tactics.

**Sport broadcast rights**

A media organization pays a negotiated fee to a sport entity for the right to broadcast a sport or sport event via TV, radio or internet. Media broadcast rights can be sold by a professional or collegiate sport league (e.g., EPL, NCAA), a sport franchise (e.g., Chelsea, New York Yankees) or sport event (e.g., Olympics, French Open) that holds the intellectual property of the content. The broadcast fee can be substantial, from thousands of dollars for a local sport event to billions of dollars for the World Cup and Olympics. The media company then sells advertising slots (e.g., a 30-second commercial) during the broadcast to companies and commercial partners that advertise products and services. Depending upon the size of the sport or event, the media organization may then sell the broadcast rights to affiliate networks in which the affiliate can sell its own advertising time. For each sport broadcast, there are a contractually agreed upon number of advertising slots. The internet operates in a similar manner with the emergence of display ads such as banner ads and rich media/video advertisements.

There is a direct link between advertising sales and programming decisions for broadcast media (Nichols et al., 2002). In other words, a program (e.g., sport event, sitcom, drama, movie) will be broadcast only if the media organization can generate sufficient advertising revenue during that program to be profitable. If not, then the program will not be broadcast. For example, a company such as McDonald’s or Nokia will not purchase advertising time during a TV broadcast of a sport event unless there is a sufficient number of viewers and/or a specific target market watches the program. However, a media organization such as a TV network may also purchase sport broadcast rights as a strategic investment to attract viewers to other programs (sitcoms, dramas, movies) the network has that are advertised during the sport broadcast (Leeds and von Allmen, 2005). To the media company, the sport broadcast represents programming content that provides a means to increase ratings, satisfy affiliates, entice advertisers and allow promotion of primetime shows. Hence, the relationship between programming, audience size and advertising revenue can be complex, but is of critical importance to all stakeholders involved.

This complex relationship is most often represented by metrics which represent a measurement of audience size and composition. Metrics of ratings and shares are used by broadcasters, advertisers and sport organizations to determine who is watching, listening or visiting, and ultimately to calculate the value and cost of commercials during the sport broadcast. Most countries have media research companies that provide this data (e.g., BAR.B, Nielson, OsTam). For TV, a rating is the percentage of homes in a geographical market area tuned to a sport program. A share is the percentage of all homes watching television within a given time frame in that geographical market watching the sport program. Other metrics that can be used for both broadcast and print media include cost per thousand (CPM), cost per point (CPP) and reach (e.g., cume) to calculate value and cost of advertisement and commercials (Mullin et al., 2007). The internet introduces additional metrics to gauge reach and audience size. These metrics include click-through rate, view-through rate, hits, page views and unique visitors. Although television is recognized as a key media source for developing and delivering content related to sport (Eitzen and Sage, 2003; Lobmeyer and Weidinger, 1992), media coverage in the form of printed newspaper and online news content continues to be an important and popular source in the distribution and consumption of sport related information (Nichols et al., 2002; Pritchard and Funk, 2006).
The influence of the printed word

Printed news content delivered through various channels continues to play a vital role in public affairs, particularly at the local level, by stimulating cognitive learning, informing readers and providing in-depth information (Drew and Weaver, 1990; Gamson and Modigliani, 1989). In fact, newspapers are perceived as one of the more credible sources for news, and are rated as more credible than television and online news (e.g., more thoroughly researched, more detailed and critical, better balanced, more competent, more professional) (Schweiger, 2000; Spiro, 2001). In addition, editorial pieces by columnists in newspapers have been found to be quite persuasive due to the credibility recipients attach to the source (Dalton et al., 1998).

Prior research has noted that news editorials can influence respondents’ beliefs related to the position advocated by the columnists. Dalton et al. (1998) reported that editorials that favored a specific candidate directly influenced reader preferences for that candidate. The source credibility operates as a peripheral cue related to the message argument, and has an important role in the message’s processing, as well as in determining the outcome of a persuasive effort (Chaiken and Maheswaran, 1994). Kaczynski, Havitz and McCarville (2005) reported that beliefs and intentions toward leisure service providers could be altered by how messages were framed in editorials. The authors suggested that leisure organizations should guide and direct public discourse by shaping perception and framing events. Editorials that appear in newspapers are more likely to be perceived as formal or neutral sources (e.g., not-for profit, consumer report; public service announcements), rather than a paid advertisement which has a profit-oriented motive, giving the reader more confidence in the message. In addition to the credibility, the popularity of the sport section in newspapers increases the ability to deliver content to large audiences as well as niche segments.

In sport-related research, positive editorials supporting a sport franchise can create more favorable attitudes about the team, while negative editorials create less favorable attitudes (Funk and Pritchard, 2006). In addition, research has found that an individual’s level of commitment moderates his/her attitudinal response to reading the sport editorial. For example, the prior level of team commitment functioned to stabilize beliefs and feelings as well as determine the evaluation of informational stimuli embedded in the editorial message. In other words, attitude change toward a professional sport team that occurs from being exposed to media content was evident in the less committed, but no change in attitudes was observed for committed individuals. This research illustrates how a sport consumer’s prior level of involvement can cue information processing and prompt message elaboration. This can then determine the number of thoughts and facts recalled from the message, while influencing beliefs and feelings about the sport organization.

The credibility of newspapers stems from their operational difference to broadcast media. The production and delivery of news content is not related to the ability to produce advertising revenue (Pritchard and Funk, 2006). In other words, there is no direct link between the news and advertising. Newspapers depend upon circulation rates and the more subscribers and readers a newspaper has the higher the price it may ask for advertising space. However, historically print media organizations have kept the editorial (i.e., news content) side of production separate from the advertising side of production to minimize the influence of content decisions being based on profit (Hall et al., 2007). A company may purchase advertising space in a newspaper and may even request placement in a specific section (e.g., the sport section), but this does not influence the type of news or editorial content being printed. However, newspaper advertising does influence the amount of news content since production cost is related to advertising volume. The volume of advertising determines the number of
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pages the newspaper produces. Hence, advertising revenue does limit the amount of content, but has little effect on the nature of coverage or content selection decisions.

The production and delivery of sport media have not been immune from criticism levied at the broader media culture about the transmission and construction of social reality. Newspaper publishers continue to emphasize the right to freedom of the press but socio-political and economic pressures often flavor reports given about local sport teams and events (e.g., Schweiger, 2000). Such pressure can lead beat reporters, columnists and feature writers to manipulate editorials and introduce their own biases or follow a specific agenda (Hackett, 1993). Eitzen and Sage (2003) suggest that in many instances “stories are withheld or distorted, and sport news is edited to ensure a favorable public image of the home team” (p. 253). A good example of how mass media can influence public opinion is the funding of new sport venues. In this context, influencing public opinion to support local, state or regional tax referendums for construction projects is most likely to be successful through strategic relationship building with local and regional newspaper columnists to leverage the impact that media has on public sentiment.

The venue “game”

Governments at various levels pledge millions and even billions of dollars in public funding to build sports venues for professional sport franchises and sports events. Public investment of this magnitude legitimately attracts scrutiny, particularly when the commitment directly benefits a privately owned sport club or franchise. An editorial published by one newspaper typifies the arguments of opponents to such an investment:

[City X] does not yet need, nor can it sustain, a national club of any type. There is no scientific evidence to support the benefits received from an investment such as this. Does the wider community even want one? I think if you asked the average taxpayer; there would be a resounding “no.” We need water, security, hospitals, roads, and literate children – not a professional team.

In defending against these criticisms, proponents of the investment facilitated an editorial in a competing newspaper that argued:

The stadium would be funded from the Major Facilities Fund at no cost to taxpayers. The Major Facilities Fund is derived from a levy applied to the state’s most profitable hotel gaming machine venues.

In addition, a series of weekly editorials was run, stating:

There are important economic and social benefits that the development of a new sport facility and the introduction of a representative team in a national competition could bring to our community. The new team will increase tax revenues, new money from out of town visitors, creation of full-time jobs, new roads and facilities for youth clubs, attract new businesses to the area, encourage recreational participation and active lifestyles, improve our community image and bring people together and bolster civic pride.

Proponents are usually able to generate more publicity in support of their argument via public officials, local businesses leaders, sport leagues, team players, TV and radio stations,
newspapers, and internet and social networking sites. Despite the lack of scientific evidence to support the economic and social benefits of sport venues, proponents are usually successful in persuading the general public to publicly fund the sport construction project.

In a sport marketplace that is filled with a wide array of entertainment alternatives, negative publicity can pose a very real threat to a sport organization’s market base (e.g., Funk and Pritchard, 2006; Schmidt, 1993). Building strong relationships with local media is critical. A compelling example of publicity gone wrong and the financial impact is evident in recent comments by one professional sport franchise’s management about season-long negative editorials in the local newspapers. The CEO publically stated that the negative publicity cost the club millions, in both attendance receipts and sponsor revenues. This example highlights the potential influence that mass media has not only on public opinion, but also on behavior that can influence the sustainability of a sport organization. Of particular interest is the role that mass media plays in live attendance at sport events.

**Media and live attendance**

The connection between media use and live attendance remains an important issue for professional sport organizations. Scholars have questioned whether media use and event attendance are competitive or symbiotic, but few studies have examined whether these types of relationships exist for spectators and fans. The issue revolves around the notion of symbiosis or substitution. In other words, does media coverage of a live sport event increase (i.e., symbiosis) or discourage (i.e., substitution) individuals from attending a live sport event? The findings of research are useful to understand the nature of the relationship between media and live attendance.

**Mass media as a substitute**

A number of studies reveal how mass media operates as either a substitute or a competitor for live consumption of sport events. In England, no relationship was found between media usage and live attendance at a one-day cricket test match (Schofield, 1983). Satellite coverage of EPL football matches was reported as reducing live attendance (Baimbridge, Cameron, and Dawson, 1996). In Israel, a decline in sport participation and event spectatorship from 1970 to 1990 has been attributed to television usage (Katz, Haas, Gurevitch, 1997). Zhang and Smith (1997) argue that media coverage often diminishes attendance by offering sport fans an alternate mode of consumption. The emergence of sport news programming, subscription to live webcasts, cable television coverage and dedicated sport pubs provides the means for a form of consumption without being physically present. Overall, there appears to be a negative relationship between the degree that media usage diminishes or competes with live attendance and operates as a recreational substitute. The sport and media industries recognize this relationship when media broadcasts of a professional or amateur match are not shown in the regional television market (i.e., TV blackout) in an attempt to increase spectator attendance (e.g., Bialik, 2004). Despite this evidence, other studies suggest mass media may operate in a more symbiotic way to increase live sport attendance.

**Mass media as symbiosis**

Research illustrates the symbiotic nature of mass media usage and live sport attendance. In other words, the consumption of one fuels the other. Burnett, Menon and Smart (1993)
reported that spectators with higher attendance rates also displayed heavier sport media consumption habits. Mason (1999: 409) comments that “perhaps the single largest cause of the growth in the professional sport industry has been television, which enjoys a symbiotic relationship with sport.” In England, Meir (2000) noted that an increase in the number of EPL broadcasts correlated with an increase in live attendance. Armstrong (2002: 267) also reports that frequent attendees of games are also “avid consumers of televised sport.” In a similar vein, Mullin and colleagues’ (2007) escalator model of behavior suggests that media use is actually a precursor to behavior and increases live attendance at sport events. Overall, these findings suggest that media usage both initiates and coincides with increased live attendance.

Symbiosis and substitution

The preceding discussion illustrates the complex relationship that mass media has with live attendance. Pritchard and Funk (2006) suggest that the relationship between attendance and media is both symbiotic and substitutive. In other words, both work jointly in the consumption of sport. A dual route framework (DRF) is proposed that shows two routes. One route is where both media usage and live attendance work in concert and increase together (i.e., positively correlated behavior). Individuals with light patterns of media usage (limited watching and reading mass media about the team) also have light patterns of attendance (i.e., light consumption). Individuals with heavy patterns of media usage also have high live attendance rates (i.e., heavy consumption). The second route is when an individual substitutes one form of consumption for another (i.e., media dominant consumption vs. sport event dominant consumption). For example, media is used in place of live attendance to create negatively correlated behavior. In other words, substitution takes place where one form of consumption behavior increases without changing the other form of behavior (i.e., increase in attendance unrelated to increase in media behavior creating uncorrelated behavior). The second route also highlights how a media-dominant consumer who does not attend many live games is more likely to purchase team-related merchandise, use the internet, view advertising and promotions, and be as emotionally involved with the sport team as the avid live game attendee. This media dominant consumption group underscores the importance of technology in the delivery of mass sport communication. The next section provides a discussion of sport communication and new media.

Sport communication and new media

The emergence of new media technology has provided an effective and efficient communication vehicle for sport promotion. The internet is a primary source of information for many individuals, and websites represent a low-cost promotional vehicle to communicate with current and potential customers (Filo and Funk, 2005). A large portion of consumers use the internet and destination websites to engage in information search activities during their pre-purchase search of products and services after they recognize the need or desire to attend a sport event.

Filo and Funk (2005) found that the sport product is the marketing mix element most thoroughly communicated on professional sport teams’ websites. Hence, sport organizations have placed emphasis on providing product-related information themes through website content to aid information retrieval during a visit. In subsequent research, Filo, Funk and Hornby (2009) developed a Sport Event Information Template (EIT) with fifteen distinct
themes that a sport organization should include on a sport event website. These themes include: event ticket procurement, venue site, shopping locations, accommodations, event schedule, local attractions, entertainment opportunities, travel costs, public transport, food and concessions, location of event, parking, safety and security measures, weather forecast and conditions, and traffic conditions. The template can be also modified to reflect the nature of the sport event, including details such as registration, merchandise purchase, fundraising, charity links and sponsor product trials. The authors also suggest the use of a media dedicated link on the website is advisable.

Although the internet is commonly associated with new media, new media is actually the technology that allows communication. Filo and Beaton (2009) provide valuable insight into new media and its role in the sport industry. The authors suggest that communication mediums are generally grouped into traditional and new media forms. Traditional forms are interpersonal communication (i.e., one-to-one) and mass communication (i.e., one-to-many). The second form is prevalent in the sport industry where the sport organization retains control over the content of communication and the many receive the same message. New media refers to a “many-to-many” situation where mass communications become individualized in a way that creates a two-way mass media. This new medium blends the aspects of content control of the traditional media with the individual customization of new media.

New media can be defined as the emergence of digital, computerized or networked information and communication technologies in the later years of the twentieth century. Beyond destination websites, examples of new media technologies include social media platforms, blogs, podcasts, online video streaming and mobile technology (Flew, 2008). These new media technologies share a number of distinguishing characteristics including geographic distance, speed of communication, interactivity, and interconnection and overlap among communication (Croteau and Hoynes, 2003). Each of these characteristics relates to sport promotion.

As noted above, geographic distance refers to how new media technologies transcend geographic boundaries, while speed of communication reflects the immediacy with which new media technologies allow users to access information. Sport organizations can now promote their product to a global market via new media, while new media provides sport fans with endless information on demand. Volume of communication reflects the vast array of connections shared among sport fans, as well as between sport fans and organizations. Sport fans can follow a sport team via Twitter, interact with other fans of that team on Facebook, and watch highlights on YouTube. In addition, reading (or creating) blogs, listening to podcasts, and participating in discussion forums represent additional forms of sport communication via new media.

The interactive characteristic of new media stems from the impacts of geography, speed of communication, and volume of communication. Sport fans can communicate with sport organizations and other sport fans around the world in real time via a wide array of mechanisms. Finally, the interconnection and overlap among communication reflects how the connections shared among sport fans and sport organizations are linked together. A sport organization can promote their brand via Twitter, which can then link to Facebook, as well as direct traffic to their destination website where links to blogs, podcasts and other features can be presented.

New media technologies provide a relatively easy and cost-effective means for sport organizations to promote their product to a wide-reaching, global audience. However, new media also presents a number of challenges to the sport industry. Sport organizations must
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continue to develop and maintain destination websites that generate traffic, and provide relevant information and resources to consumers.

As social media continues to evolve as an important aspect of consumers’ everyday activities, further emphasis is placed on sport organizations developing social media strategies that humanize their brands, while highlighting promotions and deals. Social media can also be utilized to encourage engagement and interaction among consumers through fan polls, fan voting and discussion forums. In addition, social media can strengthen relationships between the organization and fans through compelling content highlighting team, player and competition information. These efforts can channel the collective power of social networks.

Meanwhile, new media resources such as blogs, podcasts and online video streaming need to be understood, distributed and promoted to facilitate providing users with content when they want it, how they want it and where they want it. Finally, ongoing innovation within mobile phone technology challenges sport organizations to develop applications promoting their brand and communicating to consumers via handheld devices.

Future considerations in sport promotion

A significant issue in sport promotion remains the ability to build and sustain volume in response to fluctuating demand within niche segments and sliding demographic populations. This has created a sophisticated sport entertainment market where the sport’s communication through the media plays a dominant role. Sport marketers will need to understand how the use of technological advances informs customization of products and services for niche segments whose demographic composition and lifecycle transitions fluctuate more rapidly. In addition, there is an increased concern for security and safety at large, high-profile sport events that will require new means of communication with consumers.

Futurology is a very difficult topic but here are some items for consideration for sport promotion. Product development and technology will drive sport communication practice. Product development and modification will divide consumer attention, creating a greater need for distinct segmentation strategies that increase personal involvement. This will create a bifurcation of supply and demand that focuses on service and consumption experiences for casual spectators versus the traditionalist sport fan. A good example of this is the phenomenon of Twenty20 cricket in the UK and Australia. Sport marketing will need to become more global, creating and meeting demands of emerging markets such as India, China and Brazil. This will require a more in-depth understanding of the social, cultural and spiritual customs insofar as these customs relate to promotion.

Sport promotion will continue to evolve in relationship to changes in consumption behavior due to work–life balance and social engagement. Wireless communication will have a substantial impact on social change and social connections, and by default the practice and understanding of sport communication. Sport communication may help fill the nexus between people and wireless gadgets with hotspots or connected places. Advances in technology have and will continue to alter ways in which sport consumers live, work, relate to one another, organize their needs, and cope as members of society. The sport exchange process will continue to change with live streaming content using broadband, social networking sites, satellite sites, and use of wireless mobile devices such as iPhones and BlackBerrys that create a generation of sport consumers addicted to connectivity and communication.

Media will continue to play an important role in sport, requiring better education of sport marketing professionals and academics to understand the business of media and advertising. A firm understanding of new media will be important, as sport consumers have considerable
freedom of choice with levels of interaction and control. Advances in technology to support marketing practice will require attention to control and interactivity. The challenge will be to determine the appropriate medium for communication. These challenges are even more pronounced with the ongoing advances in television broadcasting. Developments such as high-definition (HD) and 3-D television present implications for the promotion of the in-game experience versus promotion of the consumption of sport at home or in sport bars. And as noted above, continued advances in streaming video and mobile technology will continue to enhance user control. Furthermore, the development of Social TV and Direct TV, whereby consumers view and control content while simultaneously interacting with other viewers, as well as content producers, introduces new dimensions with regard to complementary promotions and engagement. Addressing these challenges will entail blending traditional mediums (e.g., one-to-one, one-to-many as in TV, radio, internet and print) with new media (i.e., many-to-many media as in social networking sites). In response to technology, concerns over intellectual property with local media and social media sites will become more prevalent. Furthermore, increasing emphasis will be placed on reaching consumers through “alternate channels.” Podcasts, blogs and wiki technologies will continue to resonate with consumers. With regard to sport promotion, the development of viral marketing campaigns can be critical to success. Viral video refers to video content which gains popularity via internet sharing. Successful viral videos are short and attention-grabbing, and are more subtle in their promotion of the brand, service or product. These characteristics are appealing to the new generation of sport consumers. The success of viral marketing campaigns is not necessarily gauged by the number of products sold, but rather using metrics such as views, reach, user comments and user ratings. Sport brands such as Vitamin Water, NFL.com Fantasy Football, Gatorade, Nike and Sporting Lisbon have enjoyed a great deal of success from carefully crafted viral video campaigns. Sport organizations must strive to develop creative and innovative ways to speak to consumers. In addition, the growing presence and popularity of e-readers and tablets provide another mechanism by which sport organizations will promote their brands. The open source system of devices such as the iPad allows for the development of applications that can deliver content, engagement and interactivity directly to consumers.

One interesting aspect is the emergence of Sport Nomads from the impact of technology and particularly wireless devices. Advances in media technology will be used to shape delivery of sport products and services to consumers. Although motives for sport consumption will not change much, perceived and actual constraints will see a fundamental shift arising from a new flexibility and freedom that creates a new structure of time. This will make it easier to be a sport consumer (consumption of both passive and active forms of sport) and impact the way sport consumers relate to people and place. There is likely to be a change to social norms and rituals that will have a flow-on effect for sport communication. Technology allows family and friends to stay more easily connected (e.g., strong ties) but may also reduce incidental contact with strangers (e.g., soft ties) that can facilitate social cohesion. No longer will you have a spontaneous conversation with a person standing in line at a coffee shop, because the person is using a wireless device to stay connected to a person not present, or is listening to music. The sport venue may become even more like traditional places of worship that bring communities and people together.

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined and described sport promotion as a mass communication strategy. Sport promotion is critical in raising awareness among new consumers; highlighting
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attractive attributes and benefits of products and services to existing consumers; and fostering emotional connections among consumers and products. A symbiotic relationship exists between the sport industry and the mass media, in which the coverage of sport produces revenue for media companies, while the sport industry benefits from the enormous amounts of publicity generated by the media coverage. For sport organizations, this means that leveraging the media to create publicity is imperative.

This publicity can come from television broadcasts, newspaper coverage or online news and content providers. In showcasing the product via these media platforms, efforts must be made to complement live sport event attendance, rather than cannibalize traditional game consumption. Advancement in new media technologies poses even greater challenges and offers an incredible opportunity for sport organizations to effectively promote products and services. Sport organizations must evolve along with these technological developments to engage consumers across a variety of different platforms including traditional websites, social media, blogs, podcasts and wireless technology. Effective sport promotion via traditional media and new media technologies will assist the sport industry in confronting an era where sport consumers demand the delivery of the communication of content where they want it, when they want it, and how they want it.

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