Marketing the Fantasy Football League: Utilization of Simulation to Enhance Sport Marketing Concepts

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The use of simulation offers marketing educators many instructional opportunities that would be unavailable to students without the use of simulation. The operation of a fantasy football league offers a simulation that encompasses many of the factors that occur in day-to-day marketing operations in the sport industry. Previous studies investigating the use of role-play and simulation activities have documented higher levels of student motivation and involvement compared with traditional lecture methods. Through simulation, the student becomes an active participant in problem-solving situations rather than a passive recipient of information. Simulations also help prepare students to gain job-related skills desired by future employers. To explore the use of simulation, this article will examine the development and the advantages and disadvantages of using a fantasy football league to enhance comprehension of sport marketing concepts.

Kurt Warner's 4 touchdown passes and Marvin Harrison's 3 TD catches led the Tulsa Twisters to a 57-43 victory over the San Antonio Rustlers. The victory places Tulsa in first place of the Central Division, two games ahead of the Milwaukee Steam who are paced by Marshall Faulk's league-leading 15 touchdowns.

This narrative does not describe an all-star game or the demise of the National Football League (NFL); rather, it describes the weekly action of the fantasy football league. While dismissed by many as a silly diversion for overzealous football fans, it is nonetheless a popular pastime that has swept the United States in the past decade. Research estimates predict that more than 100 million fantasy football teams will be in existence by the end of the 2000 football season (Hiestand 1999). SportsLine.com, arguably one of the most popular Internet sports sites, receives more than 35.1 million hits daily from fantasy sport enthusiasts (Muellner 2000). Fantasy football offers participants the opportunity to make managerial decisions and to determine strategy for the fictitious teams composed of players from the NFL. While few individuals will reach positions that decide player selection and/or starting lineups in professional sports, there are other decisions regarding the marketing of a fantasy football team that can simulate jobs that many of our students will hold in the future. In addition to being an enjoyable pastime, the operation of a fantasy sport league provides a simulation that can be used as an innovative teaching tool.

The use of simulation in the classroom allows the student to obtain a level of comprehension and skill development that is seldom reached through traditional teaching methods. The use of a fantasy football league offers a simulation that encompasses many of the factors that occur in day-to-day marketing operations in the sport industry. To explore this concept further, this article will examine the development and use of a fantasy football league to enhance comprehension of sport marketing concepts. The incorporation of multiple individuals outside of the classroom and the unpredictable nature of sporting events make this project a truly innovative learning tool.

SIMULATION

A widely accepted definition of *simulation* describes it as a pedagogical method attempting to reflect actual situations through use of games, scenarios, role-playing, sociodrama, and decision-making experiences (Andes 1983; London 1970). This definition provides us with a broad base from which simulations may be developed and does not limit marketing educators to the contemporary notion that all simulations are computer based. The use of simulations primarily using human interaction (role-play) versus computer-based virtual simulations that minimize human interaction actually encourages greater emphasis on role-playing and sociodrama and the communication and leadership skills they demand. The inclusion of these and other human relations skills, in addition to academic objectives of the simulation, increases

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the applicability of the skills and information learned and promotes the use of simulation as an innovative teaching tool.

ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF USING SIMULATION

Advantages

The use of simulation as a teaching tool holds many advantages to traditional lecture formats. Previous studies investigating the use of role-play and simulation activities have documented higher levels of student motivation and involvement compared with traditional lecture methods (Bobbitt et al. 2000; Newman et al. 2000). Generally, student motivation for using simulations is high because they help students experience direct application of skills and concepts learned in the classroom setting. Through simulation, the student becomes an active participant in the problem-solving situations rather than a passive recipient of information (Shakarian 1995). Students are further encouraged to explore new and innovative solutions to problems due to the low risk associated with the outcome of their decisions.

The viability of the simulation also helps the student develop the anticipation and coping skills needed for effective problem solving. Previous research indicates that the use of simulation promotes student interaction and participation, unlike traditional lecture methods that foster a sterile environment that discourages student involvement. The ability to predict consumer behavior and market changes, as well as manage unforeseeable events of business, is often viewed by employers as their most desired skill (Floyd and Gordon 1998; Mullin, Hardy, and Sutton 2000). Thus, the simulation provides the necessary training exercises needed by sport marketing students.

The problem-solving nature of the simulation encourages the emergence of leaders from the participant groups. The shifting of instructor from classroom leader to a facilitator role dictates that the mantel of leadership be accepted by one of the group members, so that the group can solve the problems and tasks it will face to successfully move ahead in the simulation. This leadership development can also promote the effective use of cooperative learning strategies that educational researchers have identified as very effective in the development of successful organizations (Herreid 1998).

Unlike real-life problems and work environments, an advantage of simulation use is the ability to manipulate and/or control time in the scenario. The marketing instructor is able to add or subtract to the time allotted to deal with simulation occurrences. Another important benefit of controlling the time used in the scenario is that it allows for recent events to be incorporated into the simulation, which further adds to the realism of the scenario.

Perhaps the greatest advantage of using simulation is that successfully developed simulations can be repeated with each new class. While the organization and implementation of the simulation can remain constant, the perpetually changing core product in sport will always add new scenarios to the simulation. This degree of uncertainty will help both the instructor and new students remain excited about the simulation.

Disadvantages

While the advantages of using simulations make it temping to immediately incorporate them into marketing curricular plans, the disadvantages must be acknowledged before implementing a simulation. The primary disadvantage of simulation use is the amount of time, energy, and forethought that must go into its development. Marketing educators must be careful not to underestimate the length of time that the successful development of the simulation will take and should be discouraged from using the simulation until the entire scenario is completed. Failure to properly develop the simulation will result in low levels of student motivation and can also foster improper or incorrect learning throughout the simulation (Shirts 1992). The simulation must be developed in a manner that will augment information gained through classroom discussion, lecture materials, and text references to successfully be used as a teaching tool. The instructor must invest a great deal of time, effort, and evaluation to ensure the completeness of the simulation. An incomplete or poorly thought-out simulation will not produce the results desired by the instructor or the students.

The actual length of time needed for the operation and completion of the simulation is an additional consideration for the marketing educator. The multiple scenarios involved in the simulation will command a great deal of time from the students both in and out of the classroom. For the scenario to be as successful as possible, it is imperative that classroom discussion of decisions and actions taken by participants be consistently done. This will add to the length of assigned times for each topic to be discussed and/or included in the simulation. Unplanned and often unexpected changes in the simulation will also add to the length of time needed for successful completion.

An additional important consideration for marketing educators is the evaluation of the participants and their decisions in the simulation. Earlier research indicates that limited evaluation of simulations has been identified as a weakness in their effectiveness as an educational tool (Andes 1983; Chaudhry and Crick 1997; Fairbanks 1994; Herreid 1998; Shirts 1992). To combat this weakness, the instructor must plan systematic and consistent evaluation into the simulation. These evaluations will add to the overall length of the simulation but cannot be underestimated in terms of importance. The marketing educator must remember that despite the amount of fun the students are having participating in the simulation, it is a learning tool, and sufficient and effective evaluation must be included. While minimal risk is an advantage in

encouraging students to actively participate in the simulation, it can be a disadvantage if the risk is not elevated to a level that generates concern on behalf of the students. A useful method to monitor student assumption of risk is with the consistent evaluation of simulation performance. This risk factor further emphasizes the need to fully incorporate the simulation into all aspects of the course. To further minimize the effect of too little risk, the simulation should be a significant factor in course grading.

This brings focus to a potential weakness of simulation that results from failure to completely incorporate it into other instructional strategies. Simulations should not stand alone in their classroom use. They are of limited effectiveness if not successfully incorporated into all classroom strategies and evaluation methods. Simulations left to stand on their own tend to serve only as time-consuming diversions that do not have the effectiveness of those that are incorporated. Students tend to view stand-alone simulations as time fillers and as irrelevant material. The well-developed simulation will be included and incorporated into all class discussions and lectures and should be listed as a weekly topic in the course schedule and outline.

OBJECTIVES OF FANTASY FOOTBALL LEAGUE SIMULATION

While the overall instructional objectives of the fantasy football league simulation are multiple, three primary objectives were considered in its development. The first objective was to affirm the uniqueness of sport marketing concepts as disseminated to the students through classroom discussion and lecture. Second, the simulation was designed to help students develop an appreciation for working in teams (agencies). Last, the simulation was developed to investigate student use of telecommunications and their potential use in sport marketing. In additional to these objectives, the simulation also helped students to (1) enhance marketing research skills, (2) strengthen oral and written communication skills, (3) develop strong problem-solving skills, and (4) experience application of marketing theories and concepts. The following sections describe why the three primary objectives are salient to sport marketing curriculums.

UNDERSTANDING THE UNIQUNESS OF SPORT MARKETING

Sport organizations have a history of failing to rely on sound marketing concepts and research and rather operate with a group of marketing myths that remain consistent within the sport industry (Mullin, Hardy, and Sutton 2000). The most dominant of these myths is the belief that winning games will solve the need for effective product marketing. Despite research to the contrary, sport marketers find this myth the most difficult to dispel (Mullin, Hardy, and Sutton

2000). Sport marketing students need to understand the importance of sound marketing strategies and their proper use. Through the use of the fantasy football league simulation, students can experience the effects that successful marketing can have on the overall performance of the franchise. Students are evaluated and agencies are rated on the success of their marketing strategies without relationship to their "on-field" success or failure. It is important for the sport marketing student to understand that he or she will have little or no control over the core product. This places greater emphasis on the successful marketing of product extensions.

A second myth that students must overcome is the belief that the extensive amount of media coverage received by sport "takes care of the marketing." Although media coverage of sports has grown exponentially over the past decade, students must realize that it does not replace sound marketing plans and strategies. Students must develop an understanding of the potential damage that poor use of marketing strategies and overdependence on the sports media can have on the core product. To dispel this myth, students are presented with (fictitious and real) media reports that depict both positive and negative situations throughout the simulation. Students are required to incorporate and/or react to the situation and adjust their marketing plans and strategy, if appropriate. This process helps solidify the fact that the core product in the sport industry is inconsistent and unpredictable.

Last, sport marketing has long followed the misguided notion that due to the popularity of sport, "business will come to them" without sound marketing strategies. Students must be reminded that the *Field of Dreams* concept—"If you build it, they will come"—is a dangerous and potentially disastrous belief (Gillentine and Schulz 1998). Consistently, successful sport franchises in a variety of popular sports have suffered from poor attendance and lagging merchandise sales largely due to poor or nonexistent marketing plans (Mullin, Hardy, and Sutton 2000). Sport marketing instructors must help students understand that the sport product must be presold because it is simultaneously produced and consumed. The core product cannot be inventoried and carried over to the next day, making it paramount that the sport marketer successfully sells the entire product.

The simulation must overcome these myths and reflect core marketing concepts to meet the objectives of using the simulation in the sport marketing class. Students must be develop an appreciation of the failure to recognize these myths and be prepared to minimize the passage of these myths from one generation of sport marketers to the next.

DEVELOPING AN APPRECIATION FOR WORKING IN TEAMS

The ability to work as a member of a team or group is viewed as a valuable asset by potential employers (Doherty 1997). The use of teams or agencies in the fantasy football

simulation fosters a cooperative learning environment that can produce many desired outcomes. The agency grouping will help the students develop group problem-solving skills, enhance group communication skills, and promote the development of leadership abilities in agency members. The agency will also encourage the delegation of responsibilities, the recognition of individual strengths and weaknesses, and the development of higher quality products. In addition, the simulation helps students understand the synergistic concept of management through the use of multiple agency skills and abilities (Jones 1995).

The formation of student agencies also assists students in preparing for the challenges posed through working with others. The skills of conflict resolution, group and individual motivation, delegation skills, and communication will be of great importance to agency members. The successful completion of the simulation will require that the agencies learn to function effectively and efficiently as a team. Although learning to function as a team will pose a challenge to the students, students have consistently rated group projects as more enjoyable and support the research findings that they are more effective as a learning tool than individual assignments (Bobbitt et al. 2000; Hammer 2000; Shakarian 1995).

INVESTIGATING THE USE OF TELECOMUNICATIONS IN SPORT MARKETING

Internet telecommunications is one of the most powerful emerging technologies. The rapid growth of this communications avenue has had a dramatic impact on the way businesses operate. Conservative estimates indicate that more than 48 million individuals have a minimum of a personal e-mail address and that the Internet has risen to the top of information distribution services (Gillentine and Gilmore 1998). Thus, it is imperative that educators use and incorporate these technologies into the classroom setting.

The fantasy football simulation allows the educator a unique opportunity to use Internet communication venues in a number of ways. The fantasy football league uses an Internet Web site (http://www.Outback.com) as its basic communication tool. Through this site, all common league information, team rosters, league divisions, transactions, starting lineups, individual and team statistics, and league schedules are housed. In addition to this information, the league Web site also houses a weekly newsletter generated by the commissioner and instructor. The newsletter is used as a vehicle to disseminate information and rumors that the agencies are required to react to. The agencies are also sent individual and group information through e-mail. Students are required to maintain an e-mail account and must respond to all e-mail messages promptly. In addition to simulation material, e-mail is used inform students of all class events, assignments, and changes.

Agencies are required to develop their own team Web site and to formally present the site to class members and franchise owners. The agency will use the Web site to keep the general public informed of team events and progress. Students are required to inform the instructor of all progress on assignments through e-mail communication and to keep the owner informed of all proposals and meeting requests. For many students, the consistent use of e-mail and Web site communication is new. Instruction regarding e-mail etiquette and basic Web site construction must be included in curricular plans. Students should also be provided with a schedule of additional computer training sessions that may be available through campus resources.

DEVELOPING THE SIMULATION

The development of the fantasy football simulation should begin several weeks prior to the beginning of the NFL season. Fantasy sport simulations using different professional sports should also begin preparation well before the beginning of the corresponding season. As previously discussed, the marketing educator must allow for ample time to develop the operational base of the simulation for it to be successful. Students are not involved in the developmental stages of the simulation to ensure the spontaneous nature of the simulation for students. The following steps can be helpful in developing the simulation:

1. Selection of league commissioner. The selection of league commissioner is the first step in the development of the fantasy football simulation. The role of the commissioner is vital to the successful and consistent operation of the league. The commissioner is responsible for handling league operations, reporting roster development and transactions, reporting game scores and team standings, and communicating league concerns/needs to the owners and agencies. It is best if the league commissioner is someone other than the course instructor, nor should it be a student enrolled in the course. This allows the instructor to continue to serve as a resource person for the agencies and also increases the emphasis on effective communication with parties external to the marketing agency. The commissioner also plays a significant role in deciding the management tools used to operate the fantasy league. Many different commercial software packages are available for fantasy league operation. The commissioner and instructor will need to decide which software provides the support needed and is easiest to incorporate. The software provides an easy and efficient method of maintaining individual and team scoring statistics, team rosters, and league standings. While many leagues operate without the use of computer software, failure to use it weakens the objective of incorporating technology into the simulation.

2. Determining scoring/playing procedures. The determination of how fantasy league games will be scored is an

important step in developing the league. There are multiple methods to score fantasy football games, ranging from simplistic to very complex. In order not to distract students from the objectives of the simulation, a simple scoring method of play should be used in the fantasy football simulation. Each week, the owner selects seven players from his or her roster to serve as a starting lineup. The starting lineup must consist of one quarterback, two running backs, two wide receivers, one tight end, and one kicker. Owners also select a coach and a defense/special team. Scoring simply reflects the actual points scored in NFL games by the players. Fantasy teams are awarded 1 point if the coach wins and actual points if your defense/special team scores. Teams are divided into divisions, and schedules for play are determined by the commissioner (this is also a function available in software packages).

3. Recruiting owners. The recruitment of owners for the fantasy league is a crucial step in the successful operation of the fantasy league. The owners must be willing to be active participants in the simulation. The enjoyment of bringing the fantasy football league to life and the ability to play a role in the development of future sport professionals are the primary incentives for owners to participate in the simulation. Each owner actually pays a fee to participate in the league. The fees are used to purchase software (if necessary) and to provide rewards for teams achieving various league goals. The owners are asked to help with the enforcement of simulation objectives and must be willing to dedicate the time necessary to work with their marketing agency. It is advantageous to have a diverse group to maintain the realism of the scenarios. The use of owners unknown to the students and from outside the educational setting add to the usefulness of the owners' role. Often, additional individuals have been used as "business agents" or as the CEO if actual owners are "too familiar" to the students. The owners' time investment in the simulation is minimal but nonetheless very important. The owners are asked to interact with the students and to provide evaluation of selected project presentations (team name and logos, uniform designs, and promotional ideas and schedule). Owners are encouraged to spend additional time working with their assigned agency but are not "required" to spend more than a minimal time investment.

4. Identification of cities. A list of possible team locations must be developed prior to the draft. Cities are selected based on their population, geographic region, availability of suitable stadium site, and lack of current professional football team. Students will be required to conduct extensive demographic studies of the team location to identify strengths and weaknesses of the market. It is best to use cities that will challenge the students' analytical and research skills yet do not pose an impossible situation. Examples of cities used in the simulation are the following: Honolulu, Memphis, Tulsa, Little Rock, Albuquerque, and Portland.

5. The player draft. As in actual profession sport leagues, marketing agencies are not involved in drafting team players, coaches, and special teams or selecting franchise locations. These responsibilities are delegated solely to the team owners. The draft order is randomly selected and follows a descending-ascending order (i.e., 1-12, 12-1). The draft also allows the league commissioner (and course instructor) to further explain the simulation requirements of the students with the owners. It is appropriate to distribute examples of evaluation materials that owners will be required to use and to give tentative time schedules when they can expect contact from their agency. Students are not involved in the player draft, nor are they allowed input into player personnel decisions, to help maintain the realism of the simulation and reinforce the uniqueness of the sport product. Professional sport marketers will not have input into players chosen by team owners and/or player personnel directors. The draft reinforces the understanding that the sport marketer has no control over the core product. Understanding this principle downplays the importance of winning games in the marketing plan. The students learn to focus their plans only in those areas over which they can exert some control.

6. Development of scenarios. The commissioner, instructor, and team owners all play an important role in the creation of scenarios that will be introduced to the marketing agencies throughout the season. These scenarios will provide the agencies the opportunity to work through situations that support and use information acquired through classroom lectures and discussion. The course instructor determines the use and implementation of the scenarios. Scenario information is delivered to students through electronic delivery (e-mail) and through in-class assignments. Additional scenarios will develop "on their own" throughout the fantasy season. Input from team owners is also sought to develop and evaluate scenarios as they occur. Generally, the scenarios are developed prior to the season and may be used annually. Sources for the development of scenarios used in the fantasy football league simulation came from the following areas:

- Working for the rich and powerful
  Agencies learn to work with independent owners who have the ultimate authority in accepting or rejecting the agencies' marketing plans and strategies.
- Dealing with the win/loss record
  Agencies learn they have little control over the core product, and they must keep marketing emphasis on product extensions. The agencies must also learn to be proactive in generating a positive image of the fantasy team and product extensions.
- Unannounced roster transactions
  The sudden trade of or injury to a star player can have a dramatic impact on marketing plans. Agencies are often the last to be informed of roster moves made by owners yet must maintain a consistent product.

- The good, the bad, and the ugly
  The unknown can come in varying fashions. Marketing agencies may be presented with a positive occurrence by a player or coach or can be presented with unpleasant actions. Player arrests, fines, or ill-mannered public behavior all have an impact on the marketing strategies designed by the agencies.
- Weather problems
  Weather can be a hindrance to teams despite being good or bad. Poor weather during home games can keep fans away. Good weather can also present problems for teams in that it often encourages people to engage in other activities. The franchise location has an impact on the reaction to weather issues. The league commissioner and instructor determine the potential impact of weekly weather on the game-to-game attendance of teams.
- Attendance problems
  Game attendance is a good indicator of the successful marketing and development of any sport franchise. Fantasy agencies must be aware of their weekly attendance levels and react accordingly. The determination of game attendance is configured from a combination of location weather, agency scores on assignments, fan focus group reactions, and win/loss records. The franchise's win/loss record accounts for only a small percentage of the attendance, helping dispel the myth that winning takes care of marketing needs.
- League mandates
  The commissioner's office will distribute league mandates to all franchises at varying times during the season. Generally, these mandates deal with league-wide attendance, efforts to promote fan appreciation, new ways to encourage fan involvement, and innovative league-wide marketing techniques. These mandates serve as the basis for larger group projects.
- Sponsorship problems
  The financial stability of franchises and the fantasy football league is often determined by corporate sponsorship. The marketing agencies are asked to determine the appropriateness of individual sponsors and to identify potential sponsors both for the individual franchises and league wide.
- Sales campaigns
  Agencies will be asked to develop effective sales campaigns to develop a strong ticket base. Successful campaigns appropriately identify market segments and create effective ticket marketing strategies.

7. Creation of agencies. Through random assignment of students, marketing agencies are developed during the first class meeting. The random process and outcomes foster the need for team development activities and reinforce the need for learning to work with a diverse group of people. Typically, agencies consist of no more than three members and no less than two. Class enrollment and the number of franchises will dictate adjustments, but it is important to use groups rather than individuals as marketing agencies. The student groups should be referred to at all times as agencies to help promote a professional atmosphere. They are encouraged to create an agency name and use it on all presentation materials and correspondence.

8. Assignment of agencies. Once the team makeup of marketing agencies has been established, the agencies will be hired (assigned) to a fantasy football team and owner. The assignment to franchises is randomly done to discourage agencies from selecting owners and/or cities with which they are more familiar. The members of the marketing agency are required to meet with the team owner to gather information and ownership goals for the upcoming season and will continue to report to the owner throughout the season. All decisions regarding the marketing of the fantasy team must meet with the approval of the owner.

9. Incorporation of simulation. The simulation should be thoroughly infused into the course schedule. Scenarios are designed to augment course content as introduced through lecture and discussion. To ensure continuity between course objectives and simulation objectives, specific lecture topics, assignments, and response dates must be designated. Lecture topics help the students maintain the relationship between the simulation and course content. Examples of these topics are the following: researching the fantasy football league (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats [SWOT] analysis), segmenting the fantasy football league, developing the fantasy football league fan base, and sponsorship and the fantasy football league. Alternating class periods are designated for assignments and topics specifically focusing on the simulation. More time can be assigned as needed by the instructor. As the course progresses, the instructor will find additional segues between course materials and occurrences in the fantasy football league available. These often unexpected developments add to the innovative nature of the simulation.

AGENCY REQUIREMENTS

Each agency is required to formally present and submit the following materials to the commissioner, team owner, and fellow agencies. In addition, agencies are required to submit their proposal to a focus group and evaluate group response.

1. Design an overall marketing plan for the franchise.
2. Determine team names and colors.
3. Design uniforms and logo(s).
4. Determine promotional schedule.
5. Develop promotional materials.
6. Design and update team Web site.
7. Solve product problems as they arise.
8. Make a formal presentation of the marketing plan and project requirements.
9. Develop a written marketing plan, including summary and evaluation for instructor.
   The written project must include the following elements: executive summary, situational analysis, target market(s), problems and opportunities, goals and objectives, strategies, implementation and control, summary, and resources and references.

The development of team names and logos must be original. The use of current NFL or other professional sport teams logos or materials is forbidden. Agencies must also indicate when using other copyrighted images. Agencies are supplied with team location, team roster, team owner, stadium site, and team and league schedule. These materials must reflect the demographic research conducted by the agency and must meet with the approval of all parties. Images or names that may be suggestive in nature are not allowed, and the use of any such material in any promotional materials results in a fine levied against the marketing agency and the team owner.

Student agencies will also be asked to perform large group activities to investigate league problems and/or conduct research projects. These groups are formed by randomly assigning agencies to groups of three or more. Each large group is assigned a topic that they will research. Multiple topics or problems are used, and no group works on the same problem or issue. Topics for group work may include the development of fan appreciation events, the effectiveness of pregame tailgating events as a marketing tool, and the impact of player-fan interaction with fan loyalty. Generally, three large groups have been developed. Groups are required to plan, develop, and implement a research project. Periodically through this project, the group is required to present their progress and acknowledge difficulties it has encountered. The use of this large group assignment identifies another uniqueness of the sport industry demonstrating the simultaneous competition and cooperation needed for overall product success (Mullin, Hardy, and Sutton 2000).

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

The assessment of student comprehension and academic achievement during the fantasy sport simulation offers the marketing educator additional areas for innovative changes. Each agency is required to make a series of professional presentations regarding its marketing plans and strategies. The opportunity to make a professional presentation of research findings and marketing strategies only further prepares the student for professional employment. Grading procedures for presentations include professional appearance, quality of background research (SWOT), quality of visual aids, quality of handout materials, effective use of time, effective use of references, successfully answered questions, and overall effectiveness of presentation. These presentations are done not only for their classmates and instructors but also for the league commissioner, owners, and focus groups if appropriate. The inclusion of individuals outside of the classroom affirms the realism desired from the simulation. Additional evaluations of agency projects can be included, using experts in various areas of the simulation. An example would be the inclusion of a focus group when presenting proposed team names and logos, or a professional "Web Master" during franchise Web site presentations.

Student assessment also includes instructor evaluation of agency responses to the various scenarios that are presented during the simulation. These responses differ from those that are formally presented and generally are submitted in a formal written response. These responses can be in the form of an e-mail, memo, letter, or report dependent on situation. These written responses are evaluated by the course instructor and often by the league commissioner.

In-class examinations are also used in assessing student understanding of topics emphasized through the simulation. Exam questions should be modified to reflect scenarios used in the fantasy football simulation. This innovative modification further reinforces concepts stressed in the simulation.

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF FANTASY FOOTBALL SIMULATION

While the purpose of this article is to discuss the use and development of simulation in the classroom, it is appropriate to offer some insight on students' perceptions of the use of this simulation. The fantasy football simulation has been used for three semesters in a graduate-level sport marketing course. Student response ($n = 67$) to a summative simulation evaluation using a 5-point Likert scale (see Table 1) indicates that 96% felt that the simulation was a useful teaching tool. Ninety percent of students also indicated that the simulation effectively helped them understand the intricacies of working within a team situation. An overall positive response was indicated by students in all areas included in the summative evaluation. When asked to indicate their level of computer skills at the beginning of the course, 32% of the students indicated they had little or no computer skills. At the conclusion of the simulation, no students indicated they had anything less than average skills (46%), and 54% indicated they had above-average to very good computer skills (see Table 2). All students involved with the simulation felt that the use and development of a related Web site were helpful in achieving course objectives.

Written student responses also reflected a positive perception of the fantasy football league simulation and reinforced the successful achievement of course objectives (see Table 3). When asked about changes and/or additions to the simulation, students consistently indicated they would like to receive additional computer training to further their understanding of the effective use of computer communication technology.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

Fantasy sport offers an effective, entertaining, and innovative vehicle through which many educational objectives may be attained. The combination of entertainment, business, and competition offers participants in the fantasy sport simulation varying sources of motivation. The use of simulation appears to be a

TABLE 1
SUMMATIVE EVALUATION OF FANTASY FOOTBALL SIMULATION (IN PERCENTAGES)

	Agree	Unsure	Disagree
Usefulness as an educational tool	96	2	2
Ability to reflect current marketing trends	83	17	0
Ability to identify important issues	91	8	1
Ability to stimulate classroom discussion	83	10	6
Effectiveness of related assignments/quizzes	92	6	2
Promotes understanding the intricacies of working in a team situation	90	5	5
Development/use of Web site was helpful	97	2	1
Overall satisfaction with simulation	92	6	2
Recommend continued use of this type of simulation	93	5	2

NOTE: Responses *agree* and *strongly agree* were collapsed, as were *disagree* and *strongly disagree,* to offer a stronger statement of agreement or disagreement.

TABLE 2
STUDENTS' PERCEIVED COMPUTER ABILITIES

	Percentage					
	1	2	3	4	5	Mean
Before participation in simulation	10	21	43	21	3	2.85
After participation in simulation	0	0	46	36	18	3.71

NOTE: 1 = no computer skills; 2 = little computer skills; 3 = average computer skills; 4 = above-average computer skills; 5 = very good computer skills.

TABLE 3
SELECTED STUDENT COMMENTS REGARDING USE OF FANTASY FOOTBALL SIMULATION

I would much rather apply what we are learning (as we did) than rely solely on lecture and book information.
The course was excellent because we were able to take a product, our franchise, and experience some real-world marketing scenarios.
Using fantasy football helped made it [course content] more real.
I always enjoy coming to this class because the things we talk about are always timely and current.
We were able to express our own ideas in this class.
It [fantasy football] gave the class a sense of realism and practicality.
Marketing the FFL [fantasy football league] gives you a chance to actually do things you learn in class.
The FFL prepared us for realistic problems we may face.
I came out of this class with more than just a grade.
The hands-on aspect of the class made it very educational.
The real-life scenarios made everything clearer.
[What do you like most?] The fun involved.

specifically effective method of teaching sport marketing concepts. The emphasis on the application of marketing concepts helps prepare the students for expectations of future employers.

The popularity of sport and the dramatic growth of the sport industry make the use of fantasy sports an ideal educational tool. The inclusion of technology in the simulation allows marketing instructors to move ahead of traditional educational curriculums that have been slow to incorporate new technologies. Expansion of computer usage and design will serve to improve simulations and increase realism. The encouragement of student creativity will further the use of technology in these simulations. Preliminary analysis of student perceptions of the fantasy football simulation indicates an overall high level of satisfaction. Further analysis of student perceptions and performance will continue to clarify the effectiveness of simulation use.

Comparison of student performance between classes using fantasy sport simulation and classes using only lecture

methods will advance our understanding of the effectiveness of simulation as a teaching tool.

Faculty should be encouraged to consider the incorporation of simulations into their curriculums. The continued development of fantasy sport simulations will allow educators to use this educational method throughout the academic year. The use of multiple sports such as basketball, hockey, and baseball will enhance the use of simulation in teaching marketing concepts and identifying new and exciting scenarios. Careful consideration of the advantages and disadvantages of the incorporation of simulation should give marketing educators adequate insight into their potential use. In light of current calls for education reform and change, it is imperative for educators to seek effective experiential and interactive methods for teaching students. The use of innovative teaching tools such as simulation will enhance the learning experiences of sport marketing students and better prepare them to enter the workforce.

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