NBA Marketing Directors' Perceptions of Effective Marketing Techniques: A Longitudinal Perspective

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Between the mid-1980s and 1998 the National Basketball Association (NBA) experienced dramatic growth and change. The purpose of this study was to examine the kinds of marketing techniques NBA Marketing Directors thought were most effective in increasing ticket sales at the beginning and end of this period of rapid growth. By replicating a study carried out by Mawson and Coan (1994), it was possible to compare NBA Marketing Directors' perceptions of effective promotional techniques for increasing attendance in the 1988-89 and 1997-98 seasons. This study also examined marketing techniques not included in the Mawson and Coan study and compared the perceived effectiveness of various techniques in small verses large market franchises. Although there was considerable consistency in perceived effectiveness of marketing techniques in the two seasons, a number of patterns of change were discernable. There were also differences in marketing approaches in small and large market franchises.

INTRODUCTION

Over the past couple of decades, there has been increased pressure on ticket sales practitioners to adopt marketing strategies not unlike those used in other businesses. Among the changes that have led to a greater emphasis on marketing are: increased competition from the growing numbers of professional sports teams, leagues, and other entertainment options, overlapping seasons in sports that compete in the same markets, and the substantial increase in sports programming on network and cable television (Burton and Cornilles, 1998). In addition, rising costs such as escalating player salaries have forced sport managers to seek out new revenue streams, and to squeeze more profit out of traditional ones. When increased ticket prices are added to the mix, it is not surprising that ticket sales have become a high-pressure occupation.

Of all the revenue streams in professional sports, paid attendance is arguably the

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most important. According to former NBA executive Jon Spoelstra (1997), "tickets are the lifeblood of professional sports" (p.59). Spoelstra and others (Burton & Cornilles, 1998; Mawson & Coan; McDonald & Rascher, 2000) have noted that filling seats is not only crucial for direct revenue, but it produces auxiliary revenue from parking, concessions, and merchandizing sales. Attendance also affects corporate sponsorships by creating greater fan exposure to a company's products or services. The relative importance of gate receipts varies from one professional league to another. However, with the exception of the media-rich NFL, charged admissions are the most prominent source of revenue in professional sports franchises (Howard, 1998).

Ticket sales are also a revenue stream over which sports marketing departments have some control. Individuals who do marketing for a professional sports franchise generally have little say over hiring star athletes or the quality of the games that are played. They can, however, come up with creative strategies for boosting attendance even when a team is a not very good (Spoelstra, 1997; Wall & Myers, 1989). In recent years, there has been a dramatic increase in various types of promotions by professional sports teams (McDonald & Rascher, 2000). These include promotional giveaways, group discounts, free concerts and lectures, and any number of other price and non-price promotions. Market research to identify target markets has also become commonplace.

Although professional leagues are developing a variety of marketing techniques for promoting home game attendance, there has been little systematic research to determine whether these techniques are effective. Most scholarly literature on the determinants of attendance at sports events has focused on variables like won-lost records (Drever & MacDonald, 1981), ticket prices (Bird, 1982), number of star players (Noll, 1974), social and demographic variables (Baede & Tiehen, 1990; Hansen & Gauthier, 1989; Zhang, Pease, Hui, & Michaud, 1995), and the impact of television broadcasts (Zhang & Smith, 1997). While these studies have provided valuable information for developing strategic marketing plans, their purpose was not to evaluate the effectiveness of specific marketing strategies.

Several studies (Hill, Madura, & Zuber, 1982; Seigfried & Eisenberg, 1980) have included promotional strategies as independent variables affecting attendance, and have concluded that promotions do have an impact. McDonald and Rascher (2000) in their study of the effectiveness of sales promotions in Major League Baseball found that promotions increase single-game attendance by 14%. In addition, they found that increasing the number of promotions had a negative effect on the marginal impact of each promotion. Studies like these suggest that the efforts of major league franchises to increase attendance through various promotional activities do work under certain conditions. None of these studies attempted to determine whether some marketing or promotional techniques are more effective than others in increasing ticket sales.

Mawson and Coan (1994) took a slightly different approach by attempting to rank the effectiveness of a wide variety of promotional strategies. What the authors did was mail out a survey to marketing directors of 25 National Basketball Association franchises to determine their perceptions of the relative effectiveness of 21 marketing techniques used to promote attendance at home games during the 1988-89 season. Most of these techniques fell into the general categories of what is often called the promotional mix (Kotler, 1994), such as advertising, publicity, and sales promotions. Various forms of personal selling, the fourth component of the promotional mix, were conspicuously missing from the list of techniques. Marketing tools like strategic planning, carrying out

market research, and identifying target markets were also included in the list.

The authors were able to rank the techniques in terms of their perceived effectiveness by using means from a five-point Likert Scale applied to each item. Among the techniques marketing directors agreed were most effective in increasing ticket sales were season ticket options, business sponsorships used for promotional purposes, and strategic planning. The authors also found that techniques thought to be effective in high attendance franchises differed significantly from those judged to be effective where attendance was low. For instance, franchises with low attendance were more likely than franchises with high attendance to agree that strategic planning and newspaper advertising are effective techniques.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The NBA experienced considerable change between the 1988-89 season and the season ending in 1998. The 1988-89 season was the first in which the NBA moved ahead of the National Hockey League in average attendance per game (Bernstein, 2001). Attendance continued a dramatic rise in the next couple of years, reached a plateau in 1997-98, and began to decline in the following season do to a labor dispute. Michael Jordan's retirement in 1998 sent league attendance into a sharp downward plunge. Even though the league had experienced considerable growth during the period covered in this study, competition within the entertainment industry and escalating costs such as player salaries put considerable pressure on marketing departments in the NBA to come up with innovative techniques to boost ticket sales.

The purpose of this current study, which is a replication and extension of the Mawson and Coan study, was to identify promotional strategies that were perceived by NBA Marketing Directors to be most effective in increasing home game attendance in the 1997-98 season, and to compare these findings with the results of Mawson and Coan's 1988-89 survey. The expectation was that the rank order of techniques in terms of their perceived effectiveness would change through time as competitive pressures have forced teams to keep up with current trends in marketing and technological change. Because basketball, like other professional sports, has a rich-poor dichotomy, with teams in New York and Los Angeles having great market advantages over teams in Utah and Sacramento (Staudohar, 1996), an attempt was also made to see if perceptions of effective marketing techniques differ in these two settings.

METHODS

In order to determine what marketing techniques were being used by NBA franchises in the 1997-98 season to increase home game attendance, two mailings were sent to the 29 NBA Marketing Directors. For purposes of this study, a marketing director was defined as either a vice president of marketing, a vice president of sales, or a marketing director. In the first mailing, the marketing directors were asked to examine the 21 marketing techniques derived from the Mawson and Coan study, and to add any techniques that were used by their franchise but were not included on the list. Based on feedback from the marketing directors, the list of marketing techniques was expanded to 54. A second mailing then went out to the marketing directors that asked them to rate each technique in the expanded list on a 5-point Likert Scale in terms of their the level of agreement or disagreement that the technique had a positive effect on game attendance. The response rate to both mailings was 100%.

Following the methods used by Mawson and Coan, a mean was calculated for each

technique in the list, with a response of five (5) indicating strong agreement that the technique had a positive effect, and a one (1) indicating strong disagreement. Because the first 21 items in the expanded list of techniques were identical to those used in Mawson and Coan's study, it was possible to compare mean responses to the same techniques at two points in time. T-tests were used to examine the differences between specific pairs of means.

One limitation of this study is that the 21 items included in the Mawson and Coan study were derived from a review of marketing literature carried out by Hambleton (1987), and therefore may not represent a comprehensive inventory of the marketing techniques being used by franchises in the 1988-89 season. Because of this, it is not possible to conclude that the total number of marketing techniques has increased over the past decade. It should be noted that the list of 21 techniques comprising Hambleton's Marketing Research Questionnaire (MRQ) were reported to have a Cronbach *alpha* reliability of above .80, and that content validity was accepted by a panel of experts in sports marketing (Mawson & Coan, 1994).

In order to better interpret the responses made to the items in the survey, and to better grasp some of the nuances, interviews were carried out with five professional sports executives who are experts on sports marketing and ticket sales. The subjects, chosen because of their expertise and their willingness to be interviewed, were: Scott Loft, Vice President for Sales, Nashville Predators; John Nash, Former General Manager of the Philadelphia 76ers; Steve Smith, Vice President for Sales, Toronto Blue Jays; Jim Van Stone, Vice President for Sales, Cleveland Cavaliers and Cleveland Rockers; and Pat Williams, Senior Vice President, Orlando Magic. The subjects were asked to elaborate on and interpret some of the trends revealed in the data, and to discuss what they felt were the major changes influencing how tickets were sold in the 1997-98 season as opposed to in the late 1980s.

FINDINGS

Table 1. shows the mean scores and rankings for the 21 marketing techniques derived from the Mawson and Coan MTQ administered in two time periods. A comparison of the means and rankings reveals that some attitudinal change has taken place between the 1988-89 and 1997-98 NBA seasons. Although there was consistency in responses over the ten-year period, there were notable changes on specific items. Some of the marketing techniques that have increased in perceived effectiveness are television and radio advertising, and the promotion of star players. The differences in means from one time period to the next for both of these items are statistically significant. Marketing strategies that have declined a bit in the eyes of marketing directors are strategic planning and direct mailing. Both of these have fallen considerably in rankings and have mean differences from one period to the next that are statistically significant. Obtaining business sponsorships for promotional purposes and the option of purchasing season tickets have also declined in terms of perceived effectiveness, but their mean effectiveness scores in both periods were toward the upper end of the list. The use of boosters or special member clubs have fallen somewhat in perceived effectiveness, but has been at the bottom of the list in both time periods.

Unlike the Mawson and Coan study, the survey of the 1997-98 season specifically asked marketing directors to add marketing techniques not included in Hambleton's Marketing Technique Questionnaire (MTQ). The 33 additional items expanded the list to 54. Table 2 lists all of the marketing techniques that emerge when these 33 additional

TABLE 1
Mean Scores and Rankings of the Perceived Effectiveness of Marketing Techniques in the 1988-89 and
1997-98 Seasons (Based on MTQ List)***

| | 1997-98 | | 1988-1989 | | |
	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean	t-Value
Television advertising	1	4.34	10	4.06	1.79*
Pricing strategy	2	4.33	13	3.95	1.74
Radio advertising	3	4.31**	17	3.83	3.63*
Season ticket option	4	4.31	1	4.76	-2.72*
Business sponsorships	5	4.31	2	4.68	-2.24*
Newspaper advertising	6	4.21	6	4.32	-.54
Implement good P.R.	7	4.06	8	4.23	-.79
Promotional strategy	8	4.03	5	4.33	-1.56
Strategic planning	9	4.00	3	4.42	-3.09*
Select target market	10	4.00	9	4.15	-1.01
Special events	11	3.96	11	4.00	-.21
Promotional giveaways	12	3.96	4	4.38	-1.89
Promoted "star" player(s)	13	3.89	20	3.35	3.13*
Priority seating/parking	14	3.88	12	4.00	-.49
Direct mail advertising	15	3.77	7	4.25	-2.19*
Ticket options (i.e. tailgate)	16	3.67	15	3.86	-.81
Marketing research	17	3.62	19	3.50	.51
TV games as incentive	18	3.46	16	3.84	-1.45
Winning season incentive	19	3.34	14	3.94	-1.99
Magazine advertising	20	2.81	21	2.60	.85
Booster/special member club	21	2.69	18	3.70	-3.94*

* = significant at .05 level
** Means with smaller standard deviations ranked higher when there was a tie.

techniques are merged with the 21 items in the MTQ. Of the top 25 techniques marketing directors thought were effective in 1997-98, 11 were not on the original list of 21. Group ticket sales, with a mean of 4.77 topped the expanded list. Community service, mini packs, and grass roots marketing, which ranked 2, 4, and 9 respectively, were also new additions to the list.

A number of other new additions to the 1997-98 list seem noteworthy because they fall in different promotional categories from any items in the original list. For instance, Mawson and Coan's list made no reference to personal selling. In the expanded list, cold calling on businesses and telemarking rank 24 and 25 respectively. In Mawson and Coan's study, personal selling did show up in the "other" category, but was not included among items rated by all 22 marketing directors. Given the growth of the internet over the past decade, it is worth mentioning that the use of internet and websites did show up on the expanded list. The use of licensed seats was another new addition. Only 12 marketing directors rated licensed seats. The mean effectiveness score of 2.25 placed this technique near the bottom of the list along with items like cab top advertising, promotional caravans, magazine advertising, and using better and more food options.

There is much discussion in the media about disparities among large and small market franchises in their ability to compete for athletic talent and market share. Table 3 lists marketing techniques that are perceived to be most effective when the teams are divided into large and small market franchises according to the median population within 60 miles of the home arena. Small market franchises were more likely than franchises in large markets to perceive television advertising, special events, a package of options with tickets, marketing research, open houses, and booster

TABLE 2

Expanded List of 54 Marketing Techniques in terms of Perceived Effectiveness (1997-1998 Season)

Techniques	n	Mean	Standard Deviation
Group ticket sales	27	4.77	.4237
Community service projects	29	4.41	.6278
Television advertising*	29	4.34**	.8567
Mini packs (partial season ticket)	26	4.34	.9356
Pricing strategies*	27	4.33	1.1435
Radio advertising*	29	4.31	.7123
Season ticket option*	29	4.31	.8906
Business sponsorships*	29	4.31	.8906
"Grass roots" marketing	26	4.26	.6668
Newspaper advertising*	28	4.21	1.0313
In-arena promotions	27	4.07	.6156
Tickets as employee benefits	28	4.07	1.0157
Implement good public relations*	29	4.06	1.0997
In-arena P.A. announcements	26	4.03	.9584
Promotional strategies*	29	4.03	1.0171
Implemented strategic planning*	28	4.00	.7201
Corporate ticket programs	28	4.00	.7698
Special events/program at games*	26	4.00	.8000
Select target market*	29	4.00	.8018
Gave away promotional materials*	29	3.96	1.1797
Promoted "star" player(s)*	28	3.89	.9165
Civic groups (i.e. rotary clubs)	25	3.88	1.0132
Priority seating/parking*	27	3.88	1.1875
Cold calling on businesses	26	3.88	1.2108
Civic groups (i.e. rotary clubs)	25	3.88	1.0132
Telemarketing	26	3.84	1.2551
Direct mail advertising*	27	3.77	1.1209
Tickets as a fund-raising tool	26	3.76	1.2746
Game invitations for prospects	24	3.75	1.1516
Word of mouth	28	3.75	.9280
Pre-game event packaged with game	25	3.72	1.2083
Tickets options (i.e. tailgate)*	28	3.67	1.1880
Marketing research*	29	3.62	1.2653
Internet and website	25	3.48	1.0456
TV games as incentive*	26	3.46	1.3336
Post game "specialty concerts"	21	3.42	1.3990
New arena including services	17	3.41	1.2277
Outdoor advertising	24	3.37	1.1726
Various seating with club options	20	3.35	1.2680
Winning season incentive*	26	3.34	1.5216
E-mail offers	16	3.31	1.3022
Open houses	21	3.28	1.1892
Live telethon during broadcast	19	3.15	1.5371
Chalk talks	25	3.12	1.1662
Direct phone messaging	20	3.05	1.5720
Business fairs or expositions	24	3.00	1.0632
Junior "mascot name"	24	2.91	1.1389
Better and more food options	25	2.88	1.3638
Promotional caravan	16	2.87	1.3102
Magazine advertising*	21	2.80	1.1233
Booster/special member clubs*	23	2.69	1.2223
Infomercial	16	2.68	1.2500
Seat licenses	12	2.25	1.2881
Cab top advertising	14	1.85	.6630

* Also on the Mawson and Coan list.
** Means with smaller standard deviation ranked higher when there was a tie.

TABLE 3

Marketing Techniques Perceived to be Effective in Small and Large Markets
(median population 2,843,100 in 60 mile radius)

Techniques	Population	n	Mean	S D	t-Value
Television advertising	< 2,843,100	14	4.7857	.4258	3.122*
	>= 2,843,100	15	3.9333	.9612	
Special events	< 2,843,100	13	4.4615	.5189	3.565*
	>= 2,843,100	13	3.5385	.7763	
Ticket options (i.e. tailgate)	< 2,843,100	14	4.2857	.8254	3.108*
	>= 2,843,100	14	3.0714	1.2067	
Marketing research	< 2,843,100	14	4.2143	1.0509	2.701*
	>= 2,843,100	15	3.0667	1.2228	
Open houses	< 2,843,100	10	3.9000	.9944	2.548*
	>= 2,843,100	11	2.7273	1.1037	
Booster/ special member clubs	< 2,843,100	13	3.1538	1.1435	2.226*
	>= 2,843,100	10	2.1000	1.1005	

* = significant at .05 level

clubs as effective. The t-values on all of these items were statistically significant at the .05 level.

DISCUSSION

By 1997, under the leadership of league commissioner David Stern, the NBA had become the most recognized sport brand in the world (Mullin, Hardy, & Sutton, 2000). The purpose of this study was to examine the kinds of marketing techniques NBA Marketing Directors thought were most effective in driving ticket sales during this period of NBA expansion. By replicating a study carried out by Mawson and Coan that focused on the 1988-89 season, it was possible to identify changes in the NBA's approach to promoting ticket sales over a nine-year period.

One change was that the perceived effectiveness of television advertising increased over the period under study. An explanation for this is that television is less expensive and more capable of reaching target markets than was the case a decade ago. According to John Nash, one of the sports marketing experts interviewed in this study, "Back in the 1980s, you were probably buying one of the major networks or a UHF station. The proliferation of cable television has allowed teams to buy TV time inexpensively and to better target a demographic" (personal communication with the authors, July 25, 2001). Cable television, unlike billboards and other forms of advertising, is metered and can measure whether a team is actually reaching its target market.

The finding that the perceived effectiveness of radio advertising also increased from the 1988-89 to the 1997-98 season could very likely reflect the proliferation of sports talk radio in the late 1990s. In earlier years, advertisements on all-news-radio were likely to reach a large, but fragmented audience, composed of sports and non-sports fans alike. Commenting on the recent growth of sports talk radio, Nash pointed out that "in New York it is WFAN, in Philly, WIP. Every major market has a radio sports talk station that can appeal to the demographic most sports teams are chasing." Whether in the form of radio advertising or "open mike" discussions about a team's performance on and off the court, sports talk radio reaches an audience that is likely to include heavy consumers of sports.

One of the consequences of the expansion all kinds of media outlets in recent years

has been the transformation of athletes into national and international celebrities with whom millions of viewers strongly identify. By the mid-1990s, ESPN, the all-sports network, was bringing athletes into approximately 61 percent of the households in the United States on a 24-hour basis, and the numbers have increased since then (Bednarek & Peterson, 1996). It is not surprising therefore to find that the perceived effectiveness of star players in boosting ticket sales has increased in the minds of NBA marketing directors over the years, even if the players are on someone else's team (Spoelstra, 1997).

The finding that the perceived effectiveness of strategic planning as a marketing technique declined somewhat since the late 1980s is not easily explainable. Scott Loft, another sports marketing expert we interviewed, said he "cannot imagine why anyone would not put planning high on the list. Said Loft, "I live and die by a time line that is 12 months in advance. Planning means figuring how to get things done on time and hitting every deadline. This is hugely important in this business" (personal communication with the authors, July 25, 2001). It should be noted that although planning dropped somewhat in the 1997-98 ranking, it still ranked number 9 on the Mawson and Coan list, and 16 out of 54 on the expanded list. In other words it was still viewed as important.

One explanation for why strategic planning had dropped somewhat is that the league was going though such rapid growth and change (during the time of this study) that there was often little time to stop and reflect on the larger picture. People just reacted to day-to-day problems. When things are going well, as they were for most of the 1990s, the need for long term planning may not have seemed important. As students of strategic management (Kao, 1991; Posner, 1993) have pointed out, the excitement of growth can mask inadequacies in management. Rapid growth can lead management to lose sight of the importance of planning.

The use of direct mail in selling tickets decreased in perceived effectiveness during the period covered in this study. However, this finding is in need of qualification. Over the years, according to Spoelstra (1993, 1997), most teams became aware that mass mailings via direct mail are a waste of time and money. When names captured from credit card purchases of tickets and similar sources are used for data based marketing, on the other hand, direct mailing can be highly effective. "The key to successful direct mailings," said Loft "is to find out the names of people in the building and market to them. Ninety percent of people rank their pro sports experiences as positive. Thus, the possibility of resale to those people is high." The return on investment in mass mailings, on the other hand, is negligible.

The marketing technique that had the highest rank and mean score of any in this study was group sales. The growing awareness by marketing directors that people consume sports in groups has led them to set aside special theme nights for those who share a common faith, place of work, or other interest. The beauty of group sales in the minds of many marketing directors is that it gets people to a sports event who might never have attended otherwise. Once they are in the building, and like what they experience, there is a good likelihood they will come again. According to Loft, the ticket sales force views a basketball arena like a car, and group sales as "the world's biggest test drive." "There are no vice presidents of ticket sales," he said, "who will not agree that if they can get every one who comes to one game to come to two, they can get capacity crowds."

A strategy that is closely related to group sales is what some of the marketing directors in the 1997-98 study referred to as "grassroots marketing." This technique

ranked very high on the expanded list. "Grassroots marketing," according to Loft, "is taking the marketing of your franchise to the streets-into the churches, into the schools." Grassroots marketing is identified with community service. According to Steve Smith, "all professional sports leagues have traditionally targeted corporations. That's where the money is. Grassroots marketing goes to the kids in the playgrounds and schools. These are the fans of the future" (personal communication with the authors, July 25, 2001). Grassroots marketing often makes use of what Loft called the "nag factor." If children are excited about attending games, they will nag their mothers and fathers to come too.

Another marketing technique that was perceived to be highly effective in increasing sales in the 1997-98 season was the sale of mini-packs (partial season ticket plans). When asked to interpret this survey response, several of the marketing experts interviewed singled out time and cost. Even people who love professional basketball do not have the time to come to all 41 home games. Furthermore, as ticket prices have increased, largely as a consequence of higher player's salaries, more people opt for smaller ticket packages. To quote Loft, "Fans can still get their emotional rush two times a month instead of eight. And when it comes time for the playoffs, they get involved at another level."

The use of internet was not even mentioned in the Mawson and Coan study of marketing techniques used in the 1988-89 NBA season. Marketing directors in 1997-98 did mention the internet, but still ranked it somewhere in the middle of the list in perceived effectiveness. The following quote from the Loft interview provides insight into the changes internet use is bringing to pro sports.

> When we were selling back in 88-89, we could barely fax somebody information which came out in a curled up piece of paper. Snail Mail or U.S. mail was our number one option. Now when I am talking to a prospect on the phone, I have an e-brochure in front of them on the web allowing them to click on a section to see what their view will be from the seats. If you have the technology, you have to use it in the sales process.

The use of the internet in ticket sales, which was just starting to be viewed as an effective tool by marketing directors three years ago, has become an integral part of the process. Online ticket sales in the NBA rose 48 percent from the 1999-2000 season to 2000-2001. And the league is developing software to track fans' individual preferences for seat locations, opponents, and even merchandizing and food purchases (Finley, 2001).

Few topics receive more attention on sports talk radio than large market/small market disparities in professional sports and the effect they are having on the survival chances of franchises. One of the major findings of this study was that there appear to be significant differences in the perceived effectiveness of various marketing techniques in large and small market franchises in the NBA. The general opinion of the sports executives interviewed in this study was that smaller market franchises have to take a more innovative approach to marketing than is the case in large market franchises. It was, therefore, not surprising that this study found small market franchises were more likely to emphasize television advertising, market research, special events, a package of options with tickets, open houses, and special member clubs. "In New York City," says Jon Nash, "all the Knicks have to do is put up a tickets on sale sign and they will sell out. It is a very different story in the smaller markets."

The finding that the perceived effectiveness of market research was higher in small

verses large market franchises drives home this point. Scott Loft, referring to his small market Nashville Predators, said that "we are sports marketing research freaks." He views large market franchises as lazy in this regard. "They know that if a season ticket holder drops out, there are 100 prospects behind them." Small market teams, on the other hand, are fighting for every dollar. They must identify target market niches and know customer needs. The goal is to offer fans more for their entertainment dollar. Market research helps teams to accomplish this goal.

CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE CHALLENGES

Professional sports in general, and the NBA in particular, are going through a substantial period of change. The major conclusion of this study is that marketing strategies and techniques used to increase fan attendance have been constantly evolving to keep pace with changes in the leagues' internal and external environments. Franchises that do not give close attention to marketing are putting themselves at risk. When asked about the future of sports marketing in the NBA, John Nash responded that "there will be cycles. When times are good, sport marketing and the various techniques aren't as necessary. Yet, if you are not in the habit of marketing your team in good times, it will be much harder to get the marketing machine working when you need to." Thus, marketing should be a year-round process and should be rigorously pursued regardless of a team's current level of success.

It should be noted that many of the marketing strategies discussed in this study have been around since the time of Bill Veeck, a pioneer in sports marketing in the early to mid 20th Century. What is changing is the level of sophistication. One of the trends identified by the interviewees was toward using data based marketing to insure that advertising messages are reaching well-defined target markets. Marketing research is crucial to capturing the names of likely prospects and assessing their needs. Research can also track the effectiveness of marketing strategies. In the future, strategic planning will remain crucial to marketing success, especially for small market franchises. And greater efforts will be made to reach out to customers through grassroots marketing and personal sales. In sum, in place of sport marketing by intuition alone will be marketing guided by strategic planning and research, and delivered via the latest and most cost effective technologies. Only time will tell if there is a limit to the amount of commercialization and sales promotion fans will tolerate. At present, it would appear that most fans have come to expect sophisticated marketing promotions as part of the price of their ticket.

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