

Lindenwood University

Digital Commons@Lindenwood University

Theses

Theses & Dissertations

12-2021

Further the Field: Revamping Collegiate Athletic Digital Marketing Efforts

Ryan Sells

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.lindenwood.edu/theses>



Part of the [Communication Commons](#)

Further the Field: Revamping Collegiate Athletic Digital Marketing Efforts

by
Ryan Sells

Submitted in Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Sciences in Digital
Marketing at Lindenwood University

@December 2021, Ryan Sells

The author hereby grants Lindenwood University permission to reproduce and to distribute paper
and electronic thesis copies of this document publicly in whole or in part in any medium now
known or hereafter created.

Author's Name: Ryan Sells

Date: 12/7/2021

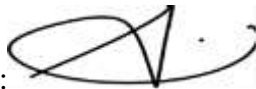
Author's Signature:



Committee Chair: Andrew Smith

Date: 12/7/2021

Committee Chair's Signature:



Committee Member: Kyle Coble

Date: 12/7/2021

Committee Member's Signature:



Committee Member: Clayton Smith

Date: 12/7/2021

Committee Member's Signature:



Further the Field: Revamping Collegiate Athletic Digital Marketing Efforts

by

Ryan Sells

A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of Master of Sciences in Digital Marketing at Lindenwood

University

December 2021

Abstract

This paper closely analyzes digital marketing strategies and athletic communications campaigns in a more technologically and content-driven era. Recent scholarly research has indicated the shift from traditional marketing methods to more current applications. This thesis paper helps to guide potential sports marketing or communications professionals in the everchanging industry of collegiate athletics. Successful campaigns have been closely analyzed and serve as an indicator of potential future marketing plans that can be put in action. Scholarly articles were strong components in the research process and helped to explain the impact of two-way communication and personalization content ideas. To implement successful digital marketing strategies at the college level, an athletic marketer must utilize these two-way communication methods and brand building tools.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my professor, Dr. Curtis, committee chair, Professor Smith, and committee members, Professor Coble and Professor Smith, for their assistance, encouragement, and support as I have pursued a thesis paper in a subject I am passionate about. I would also like to thank my close friends and family members for providing the necessary emotional support as I near the completion of my Master of Science degree in Digital Marketing.

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	III
Acknowledgements.....	IV
Table(s).....	VI
Introduction.....	1
Literature Review.....	7
Research Methodology	30
Results.....	38
Analysis of Results	45
Conclusion	51
Works Cited	53

TABLE(S)

Sport	Institution (Conference)	Twitter	Instagram	Facebook	Total Following
Football	Alabama (SEC)	@AlabamaFTBL (1,000,000)	@alabamafbl (1,000,000)	AlabamaFTBL (1,400,000)	3,400,000
Men's Basketball	Duke (ACC)	@DukeMBB (2,200,000)	@dukembb (1,200,000)	DukeMBB (700,000)	3,900,000
Women's Basketball	UConn (Big East)	@UConnWBB (120,000)	@uconnwbb (190,000)	UConnWBB (180,000)	490,000
Baseball	LSU (SEC)	@LSUbaseball (300,000)	@lsubaseball (160,000)	lsubaseball (380,000)	840,000
Softball	Alabama (SEC)	@AlabamaSB (130,000)	@bamasb (130,000)	Alabamasoftball (140,000)	400,000
Volleyball	Nebraska (Big 10)	@Huskervball (120,000)	@huskervolleyball (120,000)	HuskerVolleyball (120,000)	360,000

TABLE 1

Introduction

Throughout the past few years, the college athletics marketing and digital content landscape has dramatically shifted. This includes social media, graphic design, and digital campaign efforts. The transition from traditional marketing methods to more current methods can be displayed in a multitude of fashions. Sports teams, much like many brands or organizations, are always trying to discover these new and innovative ways to attract a new audience while also maintaining a focus on their current audience(s). In comparison to the shifting of social media, the digital strategy initiatives are ever changing and always evolving. Social media has gone from a simple thought and emotion-sharing form of media to allowing products to be sold, videos and images to be posted, and large organizations and brands to communicate with their loyal consumers and steadfast doubters quickly and efficiently. To implement successful digital marketing strategies at the college level, it is important to utilize two-way communication methods and brand building tools.

Marketing is a process of social communication and business practices that aims to provide a group of individuals what they need, through the application of advertising and giving value to a good, service, or idea. Traditional marketing methods helped lay the groundwork for digital marketing efforts to this day, and many traditional tactics still provide high-value impact in the present era of marketing. Satisfying the consumer's wants and needs over the years in college sports has relied upon a change in marketing schemes; however, the footprint of traditional marketing still remains in the landscape of collegiate athletics. Billboards, print material, television and radio broadcasting, are all used to showcase the product at a university. In an environment that has seen a shift in content output and external marketing technique, the role of traditional marketing in present-day athletics cannot be undermined.

Traditional marketing is still engrained in the fibers of collegiate athletic marketing; however, digital marketing has and will continue to see an uptick in usage. Finding ways to improve and revamp social media strategies is a challenge many athletics departments are facing across the country. Every year, new students are entering the schools as older students graduate and move on to different facets of their lives. These athletic departments must adapt and grow alongside the new generation of college goers in order to maintain relevancy and generate engagement and interaction. In order to do so, applications of digital media campaigns feature Tik Tok videos, social media stories, and quick-themed content and graphic designs that capture the attention of these viewers with shorter attention spans. Marketing professionals and athletic directors have increasingly shown support in digital marketing for athletics and have fully revamped staffs as a result, placing a greater importance on hiring staff members who can further the department or team's brand. Especially as athletic communicators and marketers enter into the unknown of student-athlete NIL (name, image, and likeness), development of a successful and well-thought out marketing plan is vital for the university. Revamping campaigns and social media aids in the elevation of team and departmental social channels and branding. Each league, however, has had its own issues managing the crisis of attracting a younger audience. The National Football League does not experience the same issues that Major League Baseball does, or NASCAR. Some of these sports organizations have easier accessibility to adapting to younger audiences than others. In the same ways that organizations have had to adapt, sports networks have had to do the same. No longer is reporting on television, or in newspapers, the most impactful way to reach fans. These networks, such as ESPN, Fox Sports, CBS, NBC, etc., have begun to utilize social media more. Graphic creation, interactions with fans and teams, and highlight package videos have gained more notability and priority.

Social media campaigns have been formulated in a way that allows them to be easily tracked and maintained. Analytics are provided in a settings page for almost every social media application. These analytics track the views that a post gets, the number of and types of responses, and whether the post is gaining or losing traction compared to recent postings. The development of hashtags, which have been around for a while, are strongly utilized by applications such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram and allow for consumers to instantly find what they are searching for. If a person is interested in cheeseburgers and where they can find a great seller of cheeseburgers, then said person can search the hashtag to find videos, pictures, and thoughts about it. This hashtag function has enabled companies to develop specific hashtags for their business and allows consumers to share around the application to gain more traction. An example of this would be Coca-Cola Company's "#ShareACoke", which encouraged consumers to share pictures and videos of their purchases with names or popular lyrics on it. In fact, the hashtag was so popular, it was, "the most-liked photo on Instagram at the time with Selena Gomez posting a photo for the campaign" (Coca-Cola 1).

It is not only social media platforms that have impacted the sports world. Video games and live streaming platforms have also taken over the field, with athletes, celebrities, and gamers becoming seemingly entrenched in each other's professions. Twitch, a broadcasting application, is the leading livestreaming service for video games in the country. Many athletes, as well, have taken use of Twitch and started to stream on it, especially as COVID-19 has hit and forced many of them into quarantining in their homes. Twitch has begun to form partnerships with leagues, similar to Twitter, allowing for NFL games to be streamed on the application. Also, popular names like Mike Evans, Karl Anthony-Towns, and even Neymar, Jr. have taken over the service

for their personal streaming uses. Even NBA All-Star Devin Booker, one of the league's youngest and brightest talents, is signed to gaming organization 100 Thieves. Selena Gomez is one strong example of the large growing number of social media influencers around the world. Think of the Addison Raes and the Charli D'Amelios, who have become millionaire internet sensations due to their rise in popularity on Tik Tok. Now, they are appearing in Super Bowl advertisements and on talk shows where they can show off products for a brand. Žák et al. states that, "many of the influencers are also bloggers, who share their own stories, experiences, or interests" (Žák et al. 1). A lot of these influencers, at one point, were relatively normal people who grew in interest because of their relatability. When they share a product, people are more inclined to buy it because they can relate with said influencer.

However, the line between gaming and sports came to light due to a variety of factors. One is that many of the youthful athletes grew up playing video games. Even then, gaming was not cast into the forefront of entertainment until the release of *Fortnite: Battle Royale* in the later months of 2017. The game was the perfect mesh of entertaining, streamability, and just fun to play, and it also brought together athletes and entertainers alike. This resulted in an explosion of viewability and catapulted video games into a way for fans of sports teams to be reached and communicated with. Whether it is through the usage of attention-grabbing videos on TikTok or Twitter, or broadcasts on video-game streaming platforms like Twitch, the future of consumer-sports brand communication will be forever changed as teams and leagues try to take the necessary steps to obtain and maintain the viewership of new generations and indicate a shift in digital media platforms.

Social media personalization can also be one of the most effective and cost-saving methods of marketing in the digital era. This research paper highlights the allowance of consumers to produce results which in turn shifts how they receive content, based on how they interact with a platform. The research consisted of the use of Reception Theory, Postmodernism, and New Historicism to highlight the scope of the field and marketing personalization for the paper, listed below in the methodology section. The application of technology to marketing has advanced the entire field of advertising faster than anyone could have thought and is the future for marketing techniques and implementations. This work will highlight techniques and products of two-way marketing communication methods. In the same light, content creation and content creators have shone in recent years and become a hot commodity to any organization looking to build a stronger bridge between the business and the consumer. Digital media teams are being employed at high rates to ensure quality content reaching the media waves, and departments are formed as a result.

For collegiate athletics teams, organizations, and/or brands, social media offers a cost-effective alternative to marketing. In many circumstances, these brands can utilize social media to monetize and create a profit. The student-athletes that attend universities and play for teams have the power to achieve the same function as the organization as a whole, representing the brand and playing a part in elevating the entity. Over the course of this paper, I will highlight the types of communication between brands and their consumers and the importance of said communication to achieve a simultaneous goal. I will also analyze the transformation of communication techniques through social media between the two parties, throughout recent history, as social media has become one of the strongest influences in marketing and

consumerism, while also spotlighting the increased importance of content creation and creators in athletics. Finally, I will delve into the methods of communication on social media that are formulated and put into practice by brands to reach out to consumers and acquire feedback in return. This paper will utilize a variety of strongly-written scholarly articles to identify and explain how digital marketing in college athletics has transformed from traditional methods to present-day digital content strategies. It is important to understand the everchanging aspects of digital marketing in such a crowded and competitive field. The research and data garnered will help to explain and educate the next generation of college athletic marketers and communicators. The landscape of collegiate athletics has shifted dramatically, and communications and digital marketing efforts are changing at a constant pace.

Literature Review

A review of the methods of media relaying and forms of content for organizational usage in marketing and communications efforts are highlighted in the literature review. The research included will look at the importance of digital media and its influence on attracting audiences. It will also analyze the forms and methods of communication between the sender and receiver to highlight the most optimal forms of communication. The purpose of the literature review is to cover forms of content that are put out by different businesses and organizations and the analytics behind the content will be analyzed. Analysis features and highlights the rise of “new media”, such as Twitch, and its influence on consumers of digital media. The evolution of communication efforts and methods from traditional methods over the past few years to the current and future of the field is also looked at in-depth. The research accumulated incorporates aspects from different backgrounds and sources, which highlights the role of digital media in modern marketing and communications efforts.

Traditional Marketing's Role in Modern Collegiate Marketing

Traditional marketing methods are campaigns that do not rely on online strategies (social media, website advertising, or other digital mechanism usage). The application of traditional marketing methods was a result of economies seeking revival. Traditional marketing was heavily reliant on the power being in the hands of suppliers or businesses, and in this case athletic departments, whereas digital marketing is more contingent on the fan or consumer (Durmaz et al. 2). Traditional marketing methods have been a longstanding foundation of communication and marketing efforts in athletics, continuing to impact the campaigns set forth by professionals to this day. In college sports, signage is still crucial to departmental success, as consumers are far

more likely to read or hang onto print advertisement than digital ads. In fact, around one-third of the millennial generation employs some form of ad-blocker (YEC), yet nearly double that percentage will read physical advertisements and pass on discarding them. Television advertisement is incredibly relevant as broadcasts of sporting events are streamed at an almost daily occurrence, allowing multitudes of viewers to be exposed to the ads.

The ability to incorporate a blend of traditional and social media marketing ideas in a campaign will bolster the department's growth. Especially in the events sector, in which fans and consumers may not be as active on social media, as they are participating in the event itself as an enthusiast. These methods contain strong potential to have far reach and clearly laid out timelines for activation (Geraghty et al. 3) that make the application of print, giveaway, or other in-person marketing especially easy. Team identification is enhanced through print media, an advantageous approach, and with content platforms and design technology like Adobe Photoshop, has been made more efficient and more visually appealing. Fair-balance marketing to those who may not be internet or social media savvy leaves room for traditional marketing in current athletics strategies and finding a way to properly manage and balance marketing efforts can impact the many instead of the few.

Marketing an athlete, team, and/or league's brand with traditional media involves strategies such as feature written stories, television commercials, and billboard appearances. One of the most popular and looked-forward to marketing events are National Football League (NFL) Super Bowl television ads, which garnered 102 million viewers in 2020, with around 50 percent of Super Bowl viewers discussing the Super Bowl commercials the next day (Lee et al. 2). The Super Bowl itself may be noted as an anomaly because of the once-a-year opportunity, but more

importantly it shows the ongoing appeal for television advertisements and traditional marketing. Advertisements that catch viewer's eyes and attention also have a strong chance of trending on social media platforms, establishing the mesh of traditional and digital marketing, and the impact of said traditional marketing on present-day techniques. DJ Uiagalelei, a collegiate quarterback, secured an NIL deal with Dr. Pepper to do television advertisements, and has the potential to elevate their brand in an avenue that saw national television spending over 500 billion dollars in spending (Bond). Many student-athletes at the college level have enjoyed newfound economic success as a result of NIL governance.

Revamping Methodologies to Enhance Athletic Communications Efforts

The college athletics industry has grown in its entirety over the years and decades, and athletics marketing has followed suit, as the “field of sport marketing has grown in importance and usage in colleges and universities” (Stevens et al. 1995). As the field has grown, there has been a greater dependency on standout strategy development and athletic marketing implementation. This includes aspects correlating to the increasing of fan attendance at events, driving interaction with posts and content online, and finding new consumers and fans and keeping them attached to the brand. Keeping up with new fan groups and age ranges helps athletic marketing departments reach new pinnacles of success and differentiate themselves from similar organizations.

Marketing to fans of college athletics does not limit itself to solely college students or college aged students, but it does involve creative methods and out of the box ways of thinking. By brainstorming and implementing new marketing techniques in such ways as “taking advantage of new technology; exploiting big events, rivalries and stars; improving targeting

efforts; tapping new markets; and, reconnecting with traditional fans and consumers” in order to stand out in the field and differentiate in the market (Martin et al. 42). Traditionally, one-way communication was a primary tool for marketers and communications personnel in college athletics, but with a drastic improvement in technology, tracking marketing plans is as efficient as ever. The ability to develop “statistically sound instruments that will assist in the evaluation of frequently used sport marketing strategies” enables tracking and measurement of success of digital strategies (Martin). Many platforms have eased the accessibility into insights and consumer tracking of social media pages, making tracking much easier.

Social media is a primary way that professionals in the field have digitally marketed to fans and audiences. For many athletic communications workers, it has become engrained in the profession in a drastic shift from just a few years ago. This is strongly due to the “popularity of social media sites, such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram” (Clavio and Kian 1) which has transformed them into “an essential part of business management, communication, and marketing plans” (Clavio and Kian). As more and more social platforms explode in the mainstream, they become useful in sports marketing. This has been seen on TikTok, where different universities have employed the platform as a tool in reaching fans. There are multitudes of purposes for social media in sports communication and marketing, as it can be used “by coaches as a recruiting tool, sports information directors (SID) as a means of providing statistical or game information, and the marketing staff as a promotional or advertising medium” (Blaszka et al. 273) showcasing the hybrid uses of the digital tool. The position and role of an SID has almost entirely changed from what it was once considered (more of a journalistic profession) into an all-encompassing sportswriter and digital content strategist.

As the research throughout the thesis dictates, the shift in one-way to two-way communication on social media indicates the transformation of usage by younger audiences. This is demonstrated as “recent research focuses on the social media goals of developing fan engagement and fostering relationships” (Blaszka et al. 274) highlighting the recognition of shifting methods by college athletic departments. In the early 2010s, Facebook was the primary social media outlet used by athletic departments and teams. But much like the shift in communication methods, the platforms being used by fans, has grown in terms of population of younger users. Research as recent as 2018 indicates “some 85% say they use YouTube, 72% use Instagram and 69% use Snapchat” (Pew Research Center 2020) and since then another platform, TikTok, has also seen a rise to the top of utilized social media platforms. The primary goal of athletic departments is to transfer content across platforms in hopes of properly reaching audiences. Each social media channel carries a specific audience, and typically there is a major difference in content that goes out to each platform. The newness of social media and the marketing abilities of it must be monitored closely. As digital campaigns and strategies are formulated, guidelines implemented at both the conference and league office level have been levied. Departments that can use social media properly and within the rules and guidelines put themselves at an extreme advantage.

How Content and Creatives are Taking Over College Sports

As technology improves and digital media becomes the normal in multiple industries, content creation and creators become more and more necessary to build a successful athletic marketing plan. A trickle down has been witnessed at multiple levels and divisions of the NCAA as organizations seek a better relationship with fans. Sports marketers and information directors

alike have placed an increased emphasis on revamping external operations, and as “fans have sought more information about their favorite teams, college athletic operations have become more than willing to engage them on different platforms” (Dittmore 3). Collegiate athletics departments at different levels of competition have begun building out external operations (marketing, communications, fundraising) in hopes of balancing the changing waves of athletics. Content creation is the distribution of any form of information, audio, video, etc. in a clever or artistic manner. The title of content creator has now “emerged as something of a catch-all to describe digitally enabled cultural producers who create and circulate content on social media platforms” (Arriagada et al. 2) and there is no strict guidelines by what makes a creator. Memes, photos, videos, etc., all encompass the idea of what can be generated to fall under the idea of content. In just half a year, in 2021, the industry of content creation generated nearly 1.5 billion dollars, showcasing the priority of the industry. It is expected that the creative and digital media field will continue to progress and produce a higher profit margin. In collegiate athletics, however, content creation is mostly emphasized in the form of social media.

It is no surprise that social media plays such an active role in college athletic marketing and communications. As more and more people have access to social platforms, they develop a greater reliance on information and information-gathering, which leads to greater media consumption. As referenced multiple times in the research paper, the opportunity for two-way communication and a greater relationship tool between student-athletes and the programs, and the fans, media, and/or stakeholders, is too great for a department to pass on. Content creation can be used to elevate the messages that are being exported on social media and create differentiation in a very competitive and watered-down market. Finding ways to stick out and

“the development of an online profile could help make a market differentiation” aid an athletics department in the long run (Green 4). This content can include graphics, photoshoots with the players, gameday hype videos and so much more. Combining stunning visuals and analytical and statistical data is an example of daily work for athletic professionals. As more departments begin to invest the necessary resources into content creation teams and digital media strategists, the universe of content creation is unlimited and untapped. Content can be used not only as an information tool but it also “has helped people to interact with each other through videos, pictures, calls and messages” (Kharmalki et al. 2).

Content creation is one of the primary tools in fan engagement and the building of an athletic brand. Departments that struggle with brand building will often not have a robust content team, which shows a strong correlation between the two things. Texas A&M, one of the most well-known and successful athletic programs in the country, employs 10 people in what they call the 12th Man Creative team. The university has formulated a brand around the 12th Man slogan, and the creative team consists of photographers, graphic designers, and digital strategy managers. The usage of creative teams means that “sport organizations can now control their own message, break their stories to the public on their own terms, and/or release proprietary” (Pedersen) and can enable fans to engage and communicate over new media channels. All of this occurs while following mandated rules and guidelines, which at the collegiate level, occurs under both conference and NCAA policy. Mastering new media and the rules is an emphasis of the creative teams, as well as the understanding of the productivity these teams can provide, all in the aim of elevating the athletic department brand.

College Athlete Branding with Name, Image, Likeness

College athletics was rocked with the introduction of name, image, likeness policy in the summer of 2021 by the NCAA. After years of not being allowed to profit off of their own names at the collegiate level, student-athletes could elevate their brands to an entire new level. This mostly comes as a result of countless legal pursuit between student-athletes (current and former) and the NCAA, but now, athletic departments must plan campaigns and content around the changing landscape. Student-athletes toed the fine line between employment and volunteerism, but with the introduction of NIL, branding has never been more accessible to players. However, because student-athletes cannot be paid by a school to attend for athletic reasons, as “policy in all three divisions preserves the commitment to avoid pay-for-play and improper inducements tied to choosing to attend a particular school” (Brutlag Hosick 5) in what can tend to be a blurred and questionable middle ground. To lead successful digital marketing strategies in collegiate athletics, it is imperative to be prepared for constant shifts in rules and guidelines, and the approval of NIL into the industry is a highlight of said shifts.

The admission of NIL guidelines and official acceptance signals the end of a long feud between current and former student-athletes, which famously was brought to light with the United States Supreme Court cases featuring the NCAA and the likes of Ed O’Bannon and Shawne Alston. The “monumental lawsuits have resulted in a contentious state of affairs for the NCAA” (Meghamez 313) as student-athletes sought (and continue to seek) fair compensation for their contributions to their respective schools. In 2017, it was discovered that “college athletics generated \$11 billion in annual revenue” and with multi-million dollar television rights deals between the NCAA and notable entertainment businesses, the NCAA was continuing to reap all

of the benefits (Meghamez 315). Research indicated that in 2013 that one of the top basketball schools, Louisville, averaged a player worth of more than one and-a-half million dollars. Bylaws set forth by the NCAA would not allow said student-athletes to maximize their own brands to profit off of it at the time until 2021 and the introduction of NIL rights.

Successful college student-athlete branding, with the student-athlete being the primary constituent of name, image, and likeness, is beneficial to both the student-athlete and the athletics department. Branding occurs when the athlete has “established their own symbolic meaning and value using their name, face or other brand elements in the market” (Montaquila 2) and often is showcased in the form of social media followers, commercial spots and advertisement deals, and partnerships. Bryce Young, a sophomore quarterback at the University of Alabama, polarized the college athletics industry after he was “presented deals worth well in excess of one million dollars” (Scarborough 2), taking early advantage of the NIL enactment. The head coach of the football team Nick Saban was quick to publicly note the amount of money that Young’s brand was earning, opting to use it as a marketing tool. This, was a subtle noting by Saban that recruits who come to Alabama can earn the same type of money. The relationship dynamic between student-athletes and athletic programs creates a two-way reliance, especially as schools are still prohibited from paying the student-athletes to attend and play for them. School officials are seeking ways to “leverage branding to their full advantage and cater their branding strategies to the specific aims of their programs” (Staff 3) to enhance digital brand strategies and reach an elite tier of athletic marketing. As referenced earlier, large and more robust creative staffs are being built to supplant this idea.

The primary struggle for athletic communications and marketing departments at the college level in the time after NIL bylaws were publicized, is how to successfully navigate the murkiness and newness of it. With the bylaws just being introduced in 2021, there was not a lot of time for schools and athletics staffs to prepare or successfully strategize sets of rules for NIL. Not only are different institutions allowed to put forth their own rules, such as Brigham Young University (BYU) whose “prohibited agreements with companies includes coffee” (McBride 4) among other areas, but at the state level as well. Athletic communicators and marketers must work closely with the compliance staff to verify that everything being done is valid and proper, avoiding any potential issue with NCAA governance. As a result of NIL introduction, many athletics departments are pairing with consulting firms, leading to a rise in the sports agency industry in college athletics. Multiple companies “like Altius Sports Partners, INFLCR, MatchPoint and Opendorse are emerging as early pioneers in this newly formed field” (Brooks 2) of the NIL landscape.

How Digital Media Connects Organizations to New Generations

Social media enhances the interactions between organizations and fans, and even athletes and fans. Looking at the last 10 or more years, Mike Green (2016) says, “the subject and growth of social media has been exponential, along with its relevance to the sport marketing industry” pointing to the usefulness of the digital platform. The brands of multiple leagues, the organizations, and players are extremely reliant on the building of their reputation through the usage of social media. No longer is the interaction on social media just a one-way street, as athletes have begun to branch out and become “influencers” in their own right. This can help to make fans feel like they are truly part of the action, and by doing so, creates a more personalized

function between the two parties. The joy that a fan may feel by going to a contest and getting an autograph is dwarfed by the chance to carry out a conversation with the person they look up to. Christian Zilles (2019) explains that with “a single tweet, a star athlete can weigh in on racial issues and influence how people view certain social, cultural or political issues.” Whether someone agrees, or disagrees, with the content being put out by an organization or player, it is often polarizing enough to create a large conversation about said topic.

Not only is social media useful for current consumers of said sports content but it can also be used to attract newer audiences. There is a litany of factors that motivate college-aged students to follow along and interact with athletic postings on social media. The four primary motivating factors for the audience are “entertainment, information seeking, social interaction, and surveillance” and the “age group has more loyalty in sports communication channels on Twitter, while they use Facebook for the gathering of information” (Kim et al. 2016). For a lot of the younger generation, they truly do not feel like they need to follow along and watch live events anymore, as they rely on social media to provide updates that they require. Most 13 to 37-year-old Americans often do not feel the need to watch live sports games to know what is going on. This highlights that a greater sense of urgency needs to be placed on how a league, team, or player markets themselves through social media. There should be less of a focus on broadcasts being re-invented to retain attention from younger audiences. While it is important to find adaptive methods to innovate how sporting events are broadcasted, the relaying of information on social media is equally, or even more, important.

For younger audiences, there has been an issue in attracting them to watch and follow sports teams and leagues and finding a proper channel of communication to reach and maintain

their fanship. Alex Silverman (2016) states that “53% of Gen Zers identify as sports fans,” as opposed to “63% of all adults and 69% of millennials” who claim themselves to be said sports fans. The most notable forms of social media that are being used by Gen Z are: Instagram, Snapchat, and YouTube. Surprisingly, Twitter is not found in the top-three, as Paige Cooper points out, “44% of U.S. 18- to 24-year-olds use Twitter” (Cooper 2019). While Gen Z does dominate the percentage of users compared to other generations on Twitter, it does not have as wide of a gap on that social media platform as a few others which were previously listed. The ability of a sports organization to correctly apply marketing methods to applications like TikTok and Twitter in reaching a medium of communication with these younger generations can create separation in viewership and fandom.

Prior to the boom of social media, many sports were able to coast off a simple marketing plan and basic communication techniques to reach the intended audience. However, as the generations of sporting fans have grown up, the younger population has never developed an attraction for sporting events as much as their parents and grandparents. Alistair Taylor says, “fans in the traditional sense are ageing, and appealing to a younger digitally-native audience is a fundamental issue that rights holders can no longer ignore” (Taylor 2020). A primary reason of this is that the attention span for the youth has been reduced. One of the most popular growing social media applications, TikTok, allows shorter videos on average. The reason for this is because the developers realized, from a marketing standpoint, it would help to reduce the staleness of content output.

The forms of social media being used has also drastically changed over the past few years. TikTok, a short-video social media posting platform, is one of the most quick-rising and

influential applications that has been witnessed in recent years. TikTok has over “800,000 million users worldwide” (Mohsin 2020), which is interesting seeing as it was founded in 2016, and currently ranks in the top-10 in social media platform popularity. Content has shifted to much quicker information tidbits being put out into the world that still allow the attention of viewers to be attained. Twitter has also shifted into an all-encompassing social media platform, being utilized as a tool that allows instantaneous content to be put out while also garnering responses from consumers of said content. Many athletes enjoy the usage of TikTok. NFL wide receiver JuJu Smith-Schuster has over 2.3 million followers on the platform, and he only ranks seventh out of all athletes on the application. Twitter also allows for live content, and one great example of this is the livestreaming of sporting events. Many NFL games have been streamed on Twitter, primarily Thursday Night Football, but the NBA has also begun to make use of livestreaming on the app. These leagues have opened up the possibilities in the sports world on what can be broadcasted from a simple media platform.

The advantage of social media is that it enables quick and instant communication between different parties, like brands and/or consumers, without the expense of other methods. While traditional forms of advertisement and marketing continue to exist and be employed, newer and more digitalized methods of marketing are trending upwards. Studies have shown that “traditional marketing methods can no longer sustain a business” (Geho et al. 2012) and with a newer and younger demographic to market towards, the style of media and marketing campaigns has naturally shifted in synch with the evolution of technology. The most populated age range in the United States belongs to the millennial group, surpassing baby boomers. The millennial age group is characterized as those between the age of 23 to 38, and “are estimated around 72.1

million by the U.S. Census Bureau” (Fry 2020). The millennial generation is well-known for its knowledge of social media and the internet and ability to use both technologies. Jaclyn Cabral identifies that “Generation Y is unconsciously addicted to social media” (2011) and stresses the importance of understanding how to market properly on these channels, using the technology to the benefit of an organization and reaching a new audience.

With YouTube, Instagram, and Snapchat being the primarily used social media applications by the younger generation, it is imperative for athletic teams and leagues not to abandon the other social media platforms as well. Instead, these parties must look at the forms of content that are being put out into different channels to identify the best ways to capture attention while continuing to be informative and sticking to the root of the entire communication effort. Rasmus Hallbäck keys in on these needs to realize the importance of channel calibration, stating that “social media channels have functioned as the only outlet for people to engage with each other” (Hallbäck 2020), as sports were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic has only furthered the discovery of the importance of social media for sports teams and athletes. Interactions on a daily basis with media in-person, or with fans, has dissipated as the different states and countries have gone into lockdown. The most successful marketing campaigns and advertising efforts calculated methods that allowed them to stand out on social media, landing successful content response. With people not being allowed to go out as much, the usage of social media skyrocketed over the past two years, with an obvious reliance being placed on these media platforms.

The younger generation has embraced video games in a way that has never been seen before. Sports leagues that allow more youthful athletes to participate and play have seen this at

high levels. Nearly 3/4 of Generation Z owns a video game console. Up-and-coming athletes come from backgrounds that involve the video game community and are forcing the leagues to branch out and create their own eSports teams. Patrick Murray, of *Forbes*, recognizes that the NBA's 2k League is noticing a breakout in the gaming world, as "broadcasts on Twitch are up nearly 70% year over year" (Murray 2020). ESPN also recognizes the importance of video games, as they also broadcast these 2k League games on their platform. Even NASCAR has gotten involved, opening lobbies on *Among Us* for fans to play with teams while races are under rain delays.

Similar to the athletes and rappers wanting to participate in each other's fields (Damian Lillard wanting to rap, and the Migos playing basketball), video game streamers have become just as popular. Many professional athletes have taken to the notable streaming website Twitch, as have professional leagues, themselves. Devin Booker, a guard for the Phoenix Suns, reached over 30,000 viewers as he streamed *NBA 2k*. These streaming platforms create an entirely new avenue for the athletes and leagues to showcase their products, while also connecting with fans in a different light. They can interact with the fans, something that during a normal season where they are on the field, court, etc., they do not get to do. However, livestreaming is not the only reason that sports teams and players are getting into gaming, as it is also because video games and consoles are becoming social media platforms, as well as a booming industry in general. Research, in 2019, shows that the global video game market is forecast to be worth 159 billion dollars, around four times box office revenues, and almost three times music industry revenues. Times are changing, and there are new ways to communicate with fans of the product, and video games are the hottest and fastest-growing way for sports brands to do it.

In the early parts of the 2010s, many sports social media accounts were utilized to pass along pertinent information in a very bland and one-way manner. Now, said social media accounts seek to “capture and encourage those real-time engagements” with the usage of livestreaming, fan feedback in the form of polls, event hosting, graphics, and other media items being posted (Barnhart 2020). Just through Instagram, Barnhart identifies that teams start to “post scoring updates, provide in-house digital content, etc.” through Instagram and the story functions. Teams themselves seek ways to reach the younger audience in a time that has been very difficult for professional sports. The Vegas Golden Knights are often-praised for their willingness to go out-of-the-box. The Golden Knights are trendsetters for many forms of sports social media. Reed Koutelas writes that “Vegas has pulled out all the stops and embraced an overt strategy to build a rabid fanbase” (Koutelas 1), as it relates to the franchise’s social media marketing. The team relies on memes, funny banter, and creative design philosophies. They interact with fans on a nightly basis and use polls to gain responses. The one on-one communication tactics implemented provide a much stronger brand-to-fan relationship and is a strong portrait of the evolution of sports social media from a one-way to a two-way communicative technique.

The Impact of Social Media Personalization

Data extraction in correlation to personalization campaigns is one of the most integral parts of the process. When creating a profile for specific businesses, a consumer lists all pertinent information to help guide and streamline the direct line. Spotify is able to do this through “its usage of music as a data extraction tool” (Braun 2020). Music extraction is an indicator that the platform is able to track what the user is listening to, the types of songs and genres, and in turn

use it to fine tune recommendations, or even create a wrap up culminating at the end of the year. This allows Spotify the capability of “predicting and eventually influencing” the future behavior of the consumer (Braun 2020). The company is not alone in doing it, as consumer privacy protection on the internet and on applications is becoming a hot topic; however, it is also handy for advertisers to use.

Universality allows for openness of access by masses of people, something that numerous companies, including Spotify are striving for. The company has openly been regarded as a “model for an ongoing transformation of the media industries” (Fleischer 2021) in which numerous other organizations have attempted to emulate, often failing. Spotify has created a reputation for maintaining a strong marketing base in which content is free, yet furthered by a subscription model, along with a “curation and algorithmic recommendation system” (Fleischer 2021). By not limiting any potential consumers, regardless of payment plan or subscription model, Spotify has opened itself up to a maximum number of users leading to increased traffic and consumption.

Utilizing technology and creating new ways to market to consumers is parallel with the ability to market on social media, one of the most cost effective and technology innovative features of the digital age. Social media offers a way for “people to freely interact with others and offers multiple ways for marketers to reach and engage with consumers,” building a two-way relationship and reinforcing two-way communication strategies (Appel et al. 2020). With multiple billions of users actively on social media, the opportunity for companies to take advantage of free advertising to the masses is there. With an uptick of individuals spending time in front of their monitors and screens, there is an advantage to be had in the marketing field. Not

only are there strong opportunities with social media, but it is incredibly easy to track analytics to find out how the posts and content are doing. It is the same for personalized content, with social media shares and website clicks and visits helping to benchmark the traction. The methods that are used to advertise on these channels are constantly being revamped “due to the fast-paced and ever-changing nature of social media” (Appel et al. 2020), leading to new methods being established. The Spotify Wrapped and PlayStation Wrap Up campaigns are evidence of this showcasing creative and revolutionary ways to market to consumers.

Two-way communication, or one-to-one communication, is the most interpersonal of any form of marketing. It typically consists of very limited styles of marketing, as it is extremely specific and tailored to one person or audience. Joining Spotify’s established and increased versatility and reputation in personalization content would be Amazon, and its “personalized book and music recommendations” (Arora et al. 2008), which replicates what Spotify does for its consumer with music recommendations and blends of content that is specifically geared towards one person, following an algorithm created by the company. By creating an encompassing communication like two-way, the marketer increases the probability that the consumer will feel more like a part of the organization and content itself. A portion of the implementation of two-way communication involves being able to “be familiar with consumers’ cognitive structure” (Greibitus et al. 2011), putting marketers in the shoes of the consumer in order to gain a better perspective of how they think and what they would be seeking from a company or product.

Digital distribution is the method of delivery for content from a company or business to the consumer. When dealing with personalized content, this becomes the highway for the two-way communication between the parties. Digital distribution has shifted the dynamics of

marketing and is “characterized by a growing concentration of power in the hands of the so-called platforms and a continuous influx of new entrants” (Donders and Boyle 2019), marking a change in the landscape of how marketing is tasked. Spotify has done a fantastic job at delivering fresh and new content to consumers, constantly mixing it up, which includes the recommendations provided to listeners. While people may be spending more time in front of the screens than ever before, cable television watchers are on a downward trend, signaling the rise of streaming platforms. People love to be in control of what they are getting and what they view, which meshes well with personalized content. Applications that utilize personalize will succeed in the long-term as a result.

Social Media Strongly Influences Consumer Brand Communication

The rise of social media marketing, and the understanding of its impact in consumer and brand relationships, keys in on the importance of the practice. Hudson et al. (2015) identifies that, “marketers can interact in two-way communications with existing and potential customers and gain rich, un-mediated consumer insights faster than ever before.” Two-way communication is the relationship and information passageway between two parties, in this specific example, between brands and consumers or fans of the brand. The practice of social media marketing has been on the rise as technology evolution occurs, and more and more of the population accesses digital media platforms. Learmonth (2012) said, “General Motors has moved 25% of its global marketing spending on the Cadillac brand into digital platforms compared to 17% three years ago, with an emphasis on video distributed through digital and social media.” Even traditional businesses, that up until recently would stay away from these social media platforms, are embracing the change in business marketing philosophy for the bettering of their business.

There is a wide array of businesses that have begun to implement these methods. Wendy's, the popular fast food restaurant, has become well-known for its friendly banter and comedic social media posts. In 2017, "a user tweeted to the Wendy's account which stated, "Yo @Wendy's, how many retweets for a year of free chicken nuggets?" to which Wendy's responded, "18 million." The tweet was retweeted over 3,470,000 times and became the most retweeted tweet of all time" (Baker 2018). Wendy's was able to build itself as one of the best social media accounts to follow by just employing a simple method of two-way communication with users on a popular social media platform.

The rise of social media and digital media platforms through the years has changed how social media affects communication in the brand-consumer relationship. Because of a rise in social media users, it has become more imperative to employ these digital media efforts than years prior. According to Statista (2018), less than a billion users existed on social media. By the year 2018, this number had reached nearly two billion active users.

It is noted that the "use of social media web sites has increased the channels of communication and its effectiveness" (Edosomwan et al. 2011). There has been an increase in channel variety, which opens up new methods of communication. We have seen social media platforms like LinkedIn, typically viewed as an employment site and professional portfolio builder, gain more traction as a social media platform and engine. Statista (2018) identified that in 2011, LinkedIn attracted 100 million patrons for the inaugural time in the history of the platform. Six years later, that number more than quadrupled, and currently LinkedIn carries around 450 million users. Often times, social media is viewed as just one lone channel of communication, but as Voorveld et al. (2018) claims, social media channels, "differ in the way in

which they are experienced, such as satisfying the need to find useful information, filling empty moments, or creating or sharing content with others.” Some companies may use social media as a way to instantly answer questions for consumers, while others welcome the opportunity to engage in fruitful banter with those that enjoy the products the business offers.

History has shown that “over the past 15 years, digital media platforms have revolutionized marketing, offering new ways to reach, inform, engage, sell to, learn about, and provide service to customers” (Lamberton et al. 2016). Social media is, “a place where consumers can learn more about their favorite companies and the products they sell” (Lamberton). No longer are social media platforms just standard information fillers highlighting a product, and neither is it a billboard to place information about a company or organization. It is purposeful in inciting feedback from those that have strong enjoyment or disdain for the product or business. The social media channels enable brands to “stay informed and keep track of the consumer-generated content surrounding their brand” (Paquette 2013).

It should be noted that there is not sole pressure to be placed on the organization for creating a communication channel with the consumer. It is crucial to know that “social media is fueled by content that is most often created and driven by consumers. It is clearly advancing as a major consumer resource as well as an activity for socializing and connecting with others in order to obtain desired information” (Dickey and Lewis 2010). The shift in dynamics of relationships between consumers and brands is more equal and balanced than ever before, due in strong part to social media. Social media and digital media platforms allow for a more open communication channel, similar to that of a forum, creating a back-and-forth style of interacting.

Social media fosters communities around brands, bringing those together with shared interests. Often times, these formed communities are managed by organizations or brands, and other times the community members themselves take control. Successful marketers understand that “people who join social media feel belongingness to a class of people with shared norms, values, and interests. Having the feeling of being socially connected is a pivotal element of one’s psychological sense of belonging to a community” (Voorn and Kommers 2013). Successful companies do a great job at fostering positive communities. The communities can help to serve as a form of brand ambassador for the product in order to raise awareness or increase profit.

Research illustrates that “the analysis reveals four underlying motivators for consumers’ social media behaviors, including brand tacit engagement, brand exhibiting, brand patronizing, and brand deal seeking. These motivators are used to derive meaningful consumer segments” (Dimitriu and Guesalaga 2017). There are multiple factors that impact the consumer’s wants and needs, and their reasons for utilizing social media in relation to a brand or organization. Brands and companies have begun to take note of these, leading to successful marketing strategies.

There are specific platforms in which businesses have taken stronger advantage of digital marketing and relationship building, and as Charalampos Saridakis points out, “sites such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram provide various means for users to interact with others, by creating, sharing, and commenting on content about anything, including brands and products” (Saridakis et al. 2016). Based on surveys conducted from 2012-2019 by the Pew Research Center (2019), the usage of social media applications by adults is dominated by Facebook (68%), followed by Instagram (37%), and Twitter (22%). However, the 18-29 age range dominates

social media usage, at 90%, (Pew Research Center 2019). It is important for these applications to apply methods that strongly attract these audiences.

This younger generation, which falls in the 18-29 range, has grown up in a technologically advanced era. The companies and brands have also developed an understanding of the importance of adapting their marketing methods, which is highlighted by Maryam Mohsin (2020), who identifies that, “73% of marketers believe that social media marketing has been “‘somewhat effective’ or ‘very effective’ for their business.”

The usage of social media in brand building and management is a cost-effective and safe way to create a name for your brand or business, developing a positive memory that lasts in the consumer’s mind. Regardless of the age or size of a brand, it is important to understand how two-way communication positively impacts and raises awareness of the organization. Even smaller businesses can take advantage of these methods to make a name for themselves in a market. This can also be said for smaller schools and collegiate athletic departments, as they are granted the same opportunity to further their brands.

Research Methodology

The research methodology that has been utilized to understand and explain the impact of different collegiate athletic digital marketing efforts involves primarily quantitative but also qualitative methods. Analysis applies said research styles in a manner that dictates the importance of social media in sports and its influence on attracting audiences. The methodology aims to help highlight the important media channels that athletes, teams, and fans use. These channels come in the form of social media, entertainment platforms, and new media devices. It also covers forms of content, while the quantitative research identifies analytics behind the postings. New media was also reviewed and studied, such as streaming services and the uprising of video games in the sports world, along with the general evolution of media in general in the sports field. Research correlating to the importance of personalized marketing campaigns and digital media applications by brands has been included. The approach incorporates analysis and fact-finding from a variation of scholarly journals, as well as statistical supportive data, consisting of a quantitative approach in order to explain the evolution of college athletic digital marketing and the trends that indicate how to run a successful campaign.

To discover which collegiate athletic departments are succeeding with social media implementation on different platforms, this paper leans on researched gathered through qualitative, and more primarily, quantitative methods. Data has been attained that highlights the most successful athletic social brands within different conference at the NCAA Division I level to discover the discrepancy between each level of conference, as well as the style of content that receives the most engagement and interaction. The statistics collected for this paper include the most up-to-date analytics public, and the content numbers all fall within the past 30 days (as of

20 October 2021). The data gathered analyzes the Division I level because it contains the most open and successful athletic social media pages of all the NCAA levels of competition.

With an inclusion of primarily quantitative research and a mix of qualitative data, the research indicates a cross-comparison of the most successful content styles, and which institution is implementing optimal digital marketing efforts. The data was analyzed between different sports, with the identity of the university and the conference, alongside each platform's analytical data and username. The social media analytics were pulled from Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook as these platforms are among the most-used social sites by athletic communication offices. While TikTok is on the rise, its newness limits data without the result of being skewed, which is why the platform was not included in the chart. The data helps to identify and explain who implements the best campaigns and what those campaigns consist of. The reasoning for analyzing a variety of sports per institution, is that some team-specific pages carry larger followings than the general athletics pages. The ability to gather insight into which sports are successful at an entire conference level helps indicate how different organizations can bolster each other.

The data collected to supplant discussion of NIL in this research paper explains the abruptness of name, image, likeness and the mystery that shrouds branding college athletes in 2021. Name, image, likeness and the introduction of the policies were sudden, catching professionals off guard, and left continued confusion. Research done into the policies themselves, as well as the differentiation between league and state officials, aids in the cleaning up process of the murky waters of NIL. Scholarly articles that contain varying degrees of insight into the events leading to NIL introduction and the famous student-athletes included in lawsuits

have been researched. Studies into current student-athletes who have begun to garner hundreds of thousands in revenue from the introduction of NIL, if not millions, have been included. Popular collegiate quarterbacks from powerhouse programs, like Alabama and Clemson, have had numerical amounts of money go public, and the research in this thesis includes analytical data pertaining to money made off NIL. The data-gathering methods in the chapter on NIL provide significant data on the impact of NIL deals and showcases the potential future of the legislation. It was found through research that NIL can also be used as a recruiting tool, both by marketers, and the coaching staffs at the respective institutions. The results gathered lead me to believe that, while the legislature is new, student-athlete branding will reach a new frontier as student-athletes garner more freedom in their right to make money off of their own image. No data gathered showed hindrance of athletic marketing staffs to continue their daily tasks, and instead, perhaps it enhances the department.

Testing new and innovative limits is one of the strongest ways to gain traction in a marketing campaign geared towards sports. Red Bull's Stratos marketing plan is a strong representative of this, as the company utilized YouTube to livestream a free fall from the stratosphere to market the brand's energy drink. Bannerflow highlights that the company set a YouTube livestreaming record with over 8 million concurrent viewers. Performed in 2012, it was one of the first of its kind as far as media marketing plans with the usage of livestreaming applications. This was a direct application of new media, especially at the time period it was put into effect. Finding a new way to implement marketing strategies and direct them into upcoming platforms differentiates a brand from others. The usage of new entertainment channels can directly aid in this differentiation strategy.

One of the biggest crossovers between gaming, sports, and entertainment occurred in early 2018 when Ninja, Drake, Travis Scott, and NFL wide receiver JuJu Smith-Schuster played *Fortnite* together. One of the biggest games of all-time, the four matched up and set the Twitch record for views. Jacob Bogage lamented the fact that the four playing together gained 630,000 concurrent viewers which smashed the previous record of 388,000. Not only did numerous news and sports outlet cover the event, it trended on social medias (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, etc.) it also thrust the gaming industry into the spotlight, while dismaying the previous notion of gaming being for geeks and nerds. Now, athletes seek out viewage while playing video games, allowing them to express themselves in a separate field. Video games, also an upcoming technology device in terms of online presence, can be attributed to helping an athlete develop an off-the-field brand.

The last case that will be looked at is the livestreaming of sporting events on applications like Twitter and Facebook. Launched in 2016, the first game had what Yoree Koh (2016) described as an “an average audience of 243,000 viewers per minute,” but more importantly than the numbers, it opened avenues for livestreaming for many sporting events in the future. The MLB has followed suit with the NFL, as they have launched a weekly livestream for a highlighted matchup during the regular season, which broadcasts on Facebook Live. Dan Bernstein comments that the deal between the MLB and Facebook is seen as a success and that “supporters of the program enjoyed the community-driven features Facebook brought to the table” (Bernstein 1). The youth are not a generation to sit in front of the television. They are always on the go and are more glued to cellphones than any other electronic. The capability of

streaming sporting events on phone applications ensures that a wider audience will be captivated and maintained.

Analytical evidence with numerical backing will seek to bolster the information gathered in the research paper, and the usage of scholarly articles found on the *EBSCOhost* site. The primary styles of research articles that were compiled for the purposes of explanations and backings are scholarly articles that have been verified by reputable sources. A majority of the scholarly articles have been written and posted within the last five years, making them extremely relevant and not outdated or controversial to the topic. All of the resources provided are verified and meet the requirements tailored in the program's writing guides. These scholarly journals help to fill in the blanks of what is a predominantly unknown industry.

It is important to understand how imperative recent scholarly articles posted about not only new personalized digital campaigns, but digital marketing and content forms of similar fashion, have unleashed data that has changed the field in the last few years. These findings that have been accumulated as part of the research process will support the thesis statement and the notion that digital marketing is imperative to companies and the relationships with consumers and is part of a future changing era in the field. Many industries are constantly undergoing change and being at the forefront of the change creates separation, especially in athletic marketing and communications.

Consumers, in general, are being studied, but the populations of consumers have been broken down by age range and generation segments. Many organizations and brands have struggled to properly utilize social media to communicate with the variety of age groups, although it is proven that more companies are allocating resources to social media marketing. A

variety of strategies implemented by both social media applications themselves, as well as large known brands, have been discussed in further. Memes, the usage of upcoming social platforms, and trending technology has helped these organizations market to build connections with a variety of groups.

The results strongly indicate that personalization as a form of digital marketing is the future of advertising and has not even reached its peak in the field yet. There are multiple ways that organizations can market to users, as my research paper has indicated and showcased, all of which utilize advantages in technology and social media. Different forms of content and even platforms themselves were dissected as a part of the research process in order to full engulf the processes that are undergone by companies and the techniques that are used to reach users. New digital platforms and enhanced content creations plays a strong role in the ability to digital market, and campaigns that place a large role on the user help in personalization.

These methods of digital advertising and personalization in content also are much more cost-effective than older advertising styles, as there is a higher probability of reach and interaction with social media, while cheapening the price of producing content, especially when it can be replicated at a faster rate online. It will require a higher cost initially to produce one common thematic project, but it can then be compiled and send out to users, allowing the consumer to provide information based on their own usage of a product. Because of social media “it is possible, with the help of digital communication tools such as social media, to develop cost-efficient yet effective marketing and communication strategies” (Bandyopadhyay 1) especially for departments of different sizes.

However, there are specific content forms that can be personalized for users, and organizations must make sure not to attempt to gear all advertising methods and marketing plans to be personalized. When integrated properly, it can be a wonderful way to give consumers something new and exciting, straying away from simple social media or email blasts, but must also be used at the correct times. The results indicate that two-way communication is one of the most interpersonal and useful marketing methods in the digital era, specifically on social media where companies can often fall into the trap of one-way methods of communication. As a whole, personalization is much more interactive for the user, which makes it more enjoyable and allows the consumer to feel special, as if they are receiving content just for them. An example of this, is Spotify's weekly discovery playlist, which comes out once a week with a list of songs that is design to fit the specific tastes of a specific listener.

The utilization of company marketing plans was instrumental in the research analysis performed. One strong example of this, was DiGiorno's celebration of National Pizza Month in 2019, where the company asked consumers to tweet at them with a # followed by DeliveryDiGiorno, and some lucky winners would receive pizza. This campaign was extremely successful, even though it was limited to one social media application, as the hashtag garnered 8.5 million impressions and 1.75 million related tweets. The reason for the success of the campaign was the creativity showcased by DiGiorno's marketing team to build brand awareness. The brand is known for making fun of delivery pizza and mimicked themselves in order to catch the attention of social media users and pizza enjoyers (Twitter Marketing, 2019). More often, popular brands on social media are finding creative ways to engage with the audience and develop differentiation amongst competitors.

Proctor & Gamble's partnering of Tik Tok celebrities to practice social distancing guidelines during the early months of 2020 as the COVID-19 pandemic began to spread is another example of a successful social media marketing plan. Charli D'Amelio was the face of the advertisement for the brand, as the company showcased its ability to utilize star power and brand ambassadors. D'Amelio currently is the most followed account on Tik Tok, with over 90 million followers worldwide. The campaign also included charitable donations by Proctor & Gamble, as they made donations to notable charities for the first 3 million Tik Tok videos created that included the hashtag #DistanceDance. Taking advantage of a rising social platform, Proctor & Gamble benefitted from creative marketing and platform recognition.

The final example of social media marketing strategies by popular brands is by the music sharing application Spotify. The brand has become notorious for its end-of-the-year compilations of consumer's music choices. However, at the end of 2019, Spotify went bigger and wrapped the entire decade for consumers. They matched this marketing tactic with a social media hashtag, labeled #SpotifyWrapped. Listeners were encouraged to share screenshots of music that was wrapped, as well as the personalized analytics behind the music (number of artists or songs listened to, etc.). The platform utilized marketing methods of making the consumer feel more important and as part of a community. The importance of a, "brand building community commitment, is that it increases brand loyalty" (Wang, 2019). Allowing users to share their Spotify-generated personal analytics, all over social media applications and stories, makes the consumer feel like they are part of the product.

Results

At the beginning of my research process, I encountered multiple scholarly articles that identified the shift in digital marketing strategies and an emphasis on content creation and social media brand establishment. After continuing research, it was important to understand not just the basis of what digital marketing is, but the impact of more traditional styles of marketing, the proper channels to which successful digital campaigns can be formulated, and importance that successful branding can have for an athletics department. It was important to look past solely sports and include an array of non-athletic environmental marketing habits in order to form a strong comparison of interlocking strategies between the different fields. After gaining a more in-depth understanding of digital marketing in college athletics, I looked to themes of popular plans. This incorporation of non-athletic and athletic research helped to form a well-rounded thesis paper and properly educate interested athletics professionals.

Three major themes are analyzed in the digital media marketing plans: the variety of media forms that are used in the attraction of audience members, as well as different media channels and the evolution of said media channels and the forms of content that are put out by the social media platforms of these professional sports leagues and teams, and athletes. Lastly, the adaptation and evolution of new media, such as video games and streaming platforms, are analyzed for the impact they have on digital media marketing performance. The results gathered through research strongly support the thesis that the baseline of collegiate athletic digital marketing is shifting rapidly. Successful organizations have emphasized content creation teams and have placed a priority on increasing social media presence. In addition to analytics gathered on different organizations and conference at the NCAA Division I level, over 50 different

scholarly articles were scoured and investigated into to provide precious insight and understanding of implementing successful digital marketing strategies.

The initial results and data gathered can be found in the Table A, listed below. The table includes the name and level of the institution, social media platform handle, and follower count (rounded to nearest hundred thousand past 1,000,000).

Sport	Institution (Conference)	Twitter	Instagram	Facebook	Total Following
Football	Alabama (SEC)	@AlabamaFTBL (1,000,000)	@alabamafbl (1,000,000)	AlabamaFTBL (1,400,000)	3,400,000
Men's Basketball	Duke (ACC)	@DukeMBB (2,200,000)	@dukembb (1,200,000)	DukeMBB (700,000)	3,900,000
Women's Basketball	UConn (Big East)	@UConnWBB (120,000)	@uconnwbb (190,000)	UConnWBB (180,000)	490,000
Baseball	LSU (SEC)	@LSUbaseball (300,000)	@lsubaseball (160,000)	lsubaseball (380,000)	840,000
Softball	Alabama (SEC)	@AlabamaSB (130,000)	@bamasb (130,000)	Alabamasoftball (140,000)	400,000
Volleyball	Nebraska (Big 10)	@Huskervball (120,000)	@huskervolleyball (120,000)	HuskerVolleyball (120,000)	360,000

TABLE 1

Research and statistics show that athletics departments are putting more money towards content and media production when the teams on the field are successful, and when a fan base has been accumulated. More in-depth insight into the most successful collegiate athletic social media pages shows that for each respective sport, the top five consisted of a conference-member institution multiple times. Baseball, softball, and volleyball had the same conference appear at least four times in the top five. Since 2019, in which Alabama football has “ranked number 1 for most relevant SEC team in terms of social media followers and engagement” (Collier 2019), the program has taken advantage of on-the-field success to carry out successful digital strategies. On-field success has proven to consistently drive numbers and engagement up for athletics teams at the Division I level.

Numerous college student-athletes have already, or plan to, earn millions of dollars on NIL deals. There is no direct equation for the amount that a student-athlete will earn, so it is impossible to project each and every individual student-athletes worth at the college level. There is a proven track record in just the past few months of substantial earning by well-branded student-athletes, such as Hercy Miller (son of rapper Master P), who earned two million dollars on an endorsement deal with a tech company. Popular LSU gymnast, Olivia Dunne, has been estimated at deals worthy of close to five or six million dollars. Most student-athletes that are garnering following meet at least one of the following criteria: have a strong social media following, attend a prestigious NCAA Division I school, or have famous connections. Mikey Williams, a high school standout athlete, is on track to earn millions after garnering a social following of over four million across all platforms. Williams has yet to play a game at the collegiate level. ESPN estimates that athletes “living in a big city with roughly 500,000 followers

could generate more than 12,000 dollars per sponsored post” (Murphy 2), and college athletic departments stand to benefit by including these athletes in their content that goes on social media, at no additional cost, because the student-athlete attends said university. Properly marketing in the NIL-era is a murky area because of the unknown and profiting off of it is even more murky.

We have seen traditional marketing methods make a strong impact on present-day techniques, and with an expectancy that digital marketing will continue to grow and assert dominance, there is no evidence of traditional marketing going away. Athletes at the collegiate athletic level will experience positive trends in brand marketing especially with the introduction of NIL legislature. Print marketing, such as schedule posters given away at sporting events, feature the student-athletes in a visually appealing manner, often also being shared on social platforms. Sending out newsletters to alumni and fans of the university or team is a common occurrence and makes the party feel acknowledged and engaged. Athletic events are broadcast on both television and radio, featuring multiple stoppages and timeouts for advertising segments. Data-gathered throughout the research paper indicates the strong appeal of television advertising and continued success of the industry. College athletes will prosper in a marketing environment built on financial success with a strong backbone, as indicated in the studies on Bryce Young and other notable collegiate student-athletes.

Red Bull has long captivated the hearts of athletes and entertainment-lovers alike. Known for their out-of-the-box marketing techniques, the brand has skyrocketed to the top of the energy drink charts, coming in at a whopping 2.89 billion in sales (MRR, 2019) in the United States, per market research reports. With their death-defying attempt to gain traction and utilize YouTube

livestreaming, which was underperforming at the time, they smashed records en route to one of the most successful live events ever on the platform. At the time, this was one of the largest history-making digital media plans, simply because of how rare a livestream of the magnitude occurred.

The Fortnite history-making event of Ninja x Drake will go down in both video game and entertainment history. Setting never-before seen Twitch records, the video game made its mark on the future of gaming in general. ESPN was among the news platforms covering said event, thrusting it into the sports world and taking away the negative stigma of eSports. While some may feel this was not a marketing plan, it is evident that the parties of both Ninja and Drake knew what they were doing when they decided to play. Ninja has turned into one of the most popular gaming industry leaders and has taken on a new form. He is no longer a sole person or video game streamer; he is an entity. Thanks to that one night of *Fortnite*, the video game and livestreaming industries have changed forever. And, thus, athletes have started to develop brands that do not solely incorporate on-the-field recognition, but also in other entertainment environments.

Livestreaming truly has become one of the digital media leaders, as many livestreaming platforms are “changing how live sport is experienced and shared across television, computer, game console, tablet and smartphone screens” (Hutchins et al. 2019). A new avenue has been found, catering to a population that has strayed away from cable television. These livestreaming platforms also have adapted to a variety of devices, understanding that each person is unique, along with the electronics that are being used. The case study that was listed previous in the

research identified the emerging usage of livestreaming for primetime events of popular sports leagues. That trend will only continue further and further in the future.

DiGiorno has altered the marketing game as far as frozen pizza brands go. From day one, DiGiorno has built their product on the slogan: “it’s not delivery, it’s DiGiorno.” Basically, stating that even though it is a frozen pizza, it still carries the freshness of a delivery pizza. This slogan, along with the techniques that the brand has applied, has made it one of the most notable frozen pizza names in the game. In 2019, DiGiorno accounted for sales of 227 million dollars in the United States (Statista 2019), nearly doubling up the second-leading brand. In the #DeliveryDiGiorno campaign, the brand utilized the hashtag system on Twitter to communicate with consumers and offer some free pizza as a prize for the two-way communication. For food and fast food social media marketing, this is an extremely well thought out tactic and innovative idea. The forms of social media utilized in the campaign were Twitter, where the hashtag function was the key piece of equipment. DiGiorno and the consumers communicated through Twitter, as graphics and replies were both used. With two-way communication more so prevalent than ever before, DiGiorno was able to take get out in front of competition and utilize successful strategies.

Proctor & Gamble created an innovative way of getting consumers involved, through the usage of a rising social media in Tik Tok. In one week, the marketing plan garnered, “more than eight billion views and 1.7 million imitation dances from celebrities” (Digital Intelligence 2020). Along with the popularity of Tik Tok, P&G also raised awareness towards COVID-19 and brought attention to the new pandemic. In their plan, P&G solely utilized Tik Tok, while relying on consumers to share other created content on other SME (Facebook, Twitter,

Instagram). According to Wallaroo, Tik Tok has 850 million active users every month, 33% of which are users that fall between the ages of 10-19. Through the usage of popular celebrities as faces of the campaign, P&G focused on the method of brand ambassadors, as well as consumers creating and sharing custom content across social media platforms.

Spotify's #SpotifyWrapped campaign was started at the end of the 2017 listening year. However, in 2019, the brand allowed consumers to view the analytics behind the entire decade, opening up another avenue for sharing for listeners. For consumers, the campaign changed the way that users could share their favorite artists and songs through social media. Spotify is the "most popular audio streaming service" with "299 million users, 138 million of whom are paying for subscriptions" (Spotify 2020). For a lot of music listeners, being able to share their favorite music at the click of a button, is extremely important. The tactics applied by Spotify includes custom content for consumers which improves a one-on-one communication, and the influence of re-sharing and posting by consumers on social media applications, the hashtag function that fosters a community of loyal consumers, where they can actively search and engage with each other's posts. These social media marketing plans utilize relatively recent forms of SME communication tactics, all of which fall upon applications which are more recent and popularized.

Quantitative research helps to provide the strongest backing for successful marketing strategies and social media campaigns. Because of how easy these campaigns are to track digitally, especially with the assistance of analytics, professionals can plan for future implementation easier than ever before.

Analysis of Results

Based on the results, athletics social success can be a result of multiple factors, such as on-field success, content implementation, and conference appeal. Departments that realize this at the NCAA Division I level have experienced much more success, and the conference as a result experiences that similar success. The purpose of the research was to explain the reasonings for departments to increase digital media use as a tool to reach potential media consumers, primarily for athletic marketers and athletic communications professionals. The results that were gathered and illustrated in Table 1 were limited to NCAA Division I institutions and a handful of sports that provide the best social insight due to amount of content that is put out on a regular basic. Sports like swimming & diving, tennis, etc. have more extended periods without content being pushed. The quantitative results supplant the notion that social media and digital content can be used to help bolster the brand of a department or team. The ability to properly analyze and manage statistics behind the social media accounts, free of cost, enhances the purposes of using social media as a marketing tool.

Table 1, which specifically looked at well-marketed sports near the top of Division I and the conferences that fall under the umbrella, saw multiple factors that lead to success of social media in athletics. Conference outlook plays a large role in the success of sport-specific social media pages, as a closer look at the data surrounding the figure witnessed multiple same-conference teams fall in the top five. Success of the program was another major factor in reaching the pinnacle of athletics social media, as many of the teams have enjoyed consistent success in their respective sports. The idea of parlaying on-the-field success to a well-placed digital campaign is one that should not be lost on an athletics department.

Traditional marketing will never truly reign again supreme due to its cost and technological disadvantages. Over the last five to seven years, digital and social marketing has evolved in a way that allows easy tracking and cheapened price, in such ways as Twitter Analytics and Instagram Insights. However, the significance and role of traditional marketing methods in the brand building of both athletics departments and student-athletes cannot be undersold, nor should it be expected to ever go away. There exists a perfect cohabitation of the two methods even as it is dominated by digital and content strategies. While looking at notable occurrences such as Super Bowl tv ads and athlete appearances in popular brand deals, traditional marketing is still noticed to this day. As many traditional marketing methods have been phased out, print marketing and face-to-face efforts are still being launched and integrated at a high rate as a way of making consumers feel like they truly are a part of something.

After reviewing data gathered on different Southeastern Conference (SEC) athletics departments, multiple universities were found to have content teams consisting of five or more full time staff members. These staff members prioritize formulating brand elevation techniques and support the department in doing so. For these content creation staffs, it is imperative to make sure to properly identify the audience a brand is looking to gain or maintain and also to understand the demographics and technology usages of said audience, as each generation differs. Communication methods are changing, from one-way to two-way, and it is important for content creation to encompass that. Posts that generate responses and back-and-forths should be focused on. That is one reason livestreaming has taken off and why athletes enjoy using it, because they can chat with fans, something that they do not typically have the ability to do. The concept of

two-way communication and the development of more personalized campaigns plays a strong role in proper brand management.

The study of student-athlete branding and the impact of NIL deals on college athletic departments contains very limited information and results due to how new the legislation is. The majority of NIL deals affect the top level of NCAA play, Division I, as the level of play is often more competitive than the following levels (compared to lower divisions). The primary purpose of the research completed was to highlight what the guideline of NIL means for athletics staff, as well as potential outcomes and benefits for marketing departments and student-athletes. For sport entities to reach maximum potential in the NIL landscape, the athletic marketer or communications professional may employ the service of outside companies and agencies trained in name, image, and likeness management. These industries have seen a quick rise as a result of mass student-athlete numbers needing guidance in the NIL-era.

It also is important to think out of the box with anything that a brand seeks to do. There will be marketing plans that fail, but one that has the potential to fail also has the potential to be a wild success. No one knew that video game livestreaming would take off, nor that there would be such a crossover between athletes, leagues, and the video game world. The COVID-19 pandemic has only furthered that, as many people have been stuck inside. It is expected that this trend will continue, even as the restrictions of the pandemic are lifted. A look into the most creative ways to reach social media users, as well as different forms of communication tactics, has been established. The research has identified who uses social media, and what age ranges these consumers of social media are. Brands approach their consumers in different ways, which has been highlighted in the research. A deeper look into the data, and the successful marketing

plans put forth by notable brands, will assist other companies and brands with their campaigns in the future.

Digital marketing is one of the most imperative trends in the field, and as technology continues to be tinkered with, there will only be continued need for professional digital advertising professionals. Because it is so new, and there is just beginning to be a larger amount of hiring being done for it, a lot of companies are not sure where to begin exactly in regard to it. The most personalization options that are available to a consumer, the more efficient the campaign will be. There should not be one dimensional advertisements geared towards generalized audiences, but instead allow the consumers to generate the data they are receiving. Once the algorithm is created, and the work is basically done, it is on the consumer to use the product to market themselves.

The advancements that have been made in modern technology have opened up avenues for digital marketing, far beyond what could have originally been imagined. From Spotify's end of the year extravaganza to places like Starbucks and Amazon creating platforms and applications that allow users to shape the way that they shop, personalized content is on the rise and can be expected to set the market trend. It will be important for organizations to make sure to take advantage of a cost-effective and useful marketing scheme. Putting the power back into the hands of the consumer will only increase the important and reliance on it as a tool for advertising. I would enjoy seeing more wrap up campaigns implemented, as I feel they offer a view of the past, which many people yearn for.

The research shows that a clear change from one-way to two-way communication has evolved over the course of the last few years on social media. Ways such as the brand's

willingness to respond to consumers through the use of the reply feature on popular applications like Twitter, Instagram, and/or Facebook has showcased that. The younger generation also seeks quicker information, with a lack of an elongated attention span in the generation, so the ability to post quick videos and GIFs helps that (evident in Tik Tok six second videos). Especially as brands look to communicate over different platforms with the fans, finding any way to interact and get the fan involved is seen as a positive from the department. More and more, it is evident that content creation and creative teams will be built and used by brands as they seek elevation techniques and awareness building. Especially in the upper echelon of NCAA Division I programs, where success hinges on both on-the-field and off-the-field accolades.

Research also identified the evolution of social media marketing tactics by brands. The case studies referenced above identified numerous ways that brands have evolved their thinking. Proctor & Gamble utilized brand ambassadors in their campaign, as well as a rising social media network. With the constant evolution of social media, the research indicates that brands are constantly seeking new ways to formulate their marketing plans. Social media marketing is referenced as one of the most important needs to fill for up and coming companies and brands. It was imperative to closely look at methods of communication on social media between brands and consumers. In DiGiorno's campaign, they utilized hashtag content sharing, along with the ability to offer a prize to some lucky consumers. People love to win free items, so this only further encouraged retweets and posts with the hashtag. It is important to understand that different social media outlets require different forms of attention. Instagram is more content sharing-centric, where Twitter is a lot more about back-and-forths. Facebook has one of the greatest community building capabilities, as well as open-ended group discussion functions.

Being able to integrate the correct tactics with the right SME is vital for any social media marketing plan.

The final results to come out of this thesis paper indicate that strong athletic marketing campaigns can still be formulated even as constant waves of change occur in the field.

Personalization and success are positive effects of well put together campaigns and have been proven to have longstanding impacts in the industry. Social media is a powerful tool that helps to enhance two-way communication between fans and sports teams and is being used at a higher rate than ever before. Campaigns run by Spotify and PlayStation have proven the worth of proper personalization strategies in the social media and technological world. Athletics departments across the country are implementing branding and two-way communications efforts as a way of forming successful digital reputations.

Conclusion

The digital marketing efforts in athletics, and more specifically at the college level, are constantly shaping and evolving. The thesis paper and research information included successfully examined and explained how the landscape of collegiate athletics has shifted dramatically, and the manner in which communications and digital marketing efforts are changing. Entry-level athletic marketing professionals and students will be able to lean on this thesis as an informative tool in learning how to properly market and pivot in the industry. Over the last decade, there has been a stronger emphasis placed on social media management and brand integration. The introduction of the NCAA NIL guidelines exemplifies this shift towards building and elevating personal and department-wide brands. The importance of brand management and navigation of digital content strategies take place in a technology-driven and digital-centric time in athletic marketing and communications.

In this paper, I have made an attempt to prove that multiple facets of digital marketing have led to the shift in strategies in college athletics, and also provide concrete examples and research-backed evidence of implementing excellent marketing campaigns. There is a strong unknown in relation to college athletic marketing due to how quickly things change, but the hope of the thesis is that it can contribute strong evidence and insight into what is an undiscovered environment. The paper was limited, at times, by the newness of the field as reported earlier. With a lack of a strong understanding of what NIL can truly offer student-athletes in terms of branding and financial success, the data included on the subject is suggestive. The thesis also relied on existing research while seeking ways to apply said research in an organic and evolving

manner. Further research must be conducted to discover if all marketing campaigns are being evaluated equally regardless of barriers to analytics.

Athletic marketing professionals must always find new and innovative methods to connect with fans and elevate the brands of the athletic department and student-athletes. The environment around college athletics is constantly undergoing change, and the ability to pivot with these changes helps a marketer or communications professional excel. Relying on previous campaigns and well-documented strategies is a major step in forming future marketing efforts. This research incorporates a blend of successful baseline campaign examples and potential future marketing impacts in order to further the field and revamp collegiate athletic marketing efforts.

Works Cited

- Appel, Gil, et al. "The Future of Social Media in Marketing." *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, vol. 48, no. 1, Jan. 2020, pp. 79–95. *EBSCOhost*, doi:10.1007/s11747-019-00695-1. Accessed 4 July 2021.
- Arora, N., et al. "Putting One-to-one Marketing to Work: Personalization, Customization, and Choice." *Marketing Letters*, vol. 19, no. 3, Dec. 2008, pp. 305-321. *EBSCOhost*, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s11002-008-9056-z>. Accessed 2 July 2021.
- Arriagada, et. al. "'You Need At Least One Picture Daily, If Not, You're Dead': Content Creators and Platform Evolution in the Social Media Ecology." *Social Media + Society*, July 2020. *EBSCOhost*, doi:10.1177/2056305120944624. Accessed 28 October 2021.
- Baker, C. "How Twitter Has Changed the Way Advertisers Communicate." *Undergraduate Review*, 2018. https://vc.bridgew.edu/undergrad_rev/vol14/iss1/7. Accessed 3 July 2021.
- Bandyopadhyay, S. "How a Cost-Effective Social Media Plan Can Make a Difference for Small Businesses." *Journal of the Indiana Academy of the Social Sciences*. 2016. <https://digitalcommons.butler.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1000&context=jiass>. Accessed 4 November 2021.
- Barnhart, Brent. "How to Use Social Media in Sports to Keep Fans Engaged." *Sprout Social*. 11 August 2020. <https://sproutsocial.com/insights/social-media-in-sports/>. Accessed 12 November 2020.
- Bernstein, Dan. "Facebook-MLB Streaming Partnership Seen as Business Success, Despite Backlash", *Sporting News*. 3 November 2018.

<https://www.sportingnews.com/us/mlb/news/facebook-watch-mlb-live-broadcast-exclusive-deal/wmcivoi9va4515msmaoosmwkw>. Accessed 6 November 2020.

Blaszka, et al. “An Analysis of Collegiate Athletic Department Social Media Practices, Strategies, and Challenges.” *Department of Kinesiology and Health*. 2018.

https://scholarworks.gsu.edu/kin_health_facpub/30?utm_source=scholarworks.gsu.edu%2Fkin_health_facpub%2F30&utm_medium=PDF&utm_campaign=PDFCoverPages. Accessed 12 October 2021.

Bond, N. “College Athletics: A New World of Influencer Marketing.” *CompereMedia*. 9 July 2021. <https://welcome.comperemedia.com/blog/college-athletics-a-new-world-of-influencer-marketing/>. Accessed 3 November 2021.

Braun, T. Andrew. “‘Dance like nobody's paying’: Spotify and Surveillance as the Soundtrack of Our Lives.” *Electronic Thesis and Dissertation Repository*, 2020, https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/etd/7001/?utm_source=ir.lib.uwo.ca%2Fetd%2F7001&utm_medium=PDF&utm_campaign=PDFCoverPages. Accessed 2 July 2021.

Brooks, K. “<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/nil-college-athletes-collegiate-sports-ncaa/>.” *Moneywatch*. 30 July 2021. <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/nil-college-athletes-collegiate-sports-ncaa/>. Accessed 21 October 2021.

Brutlag Hosick, M. “NCAA Adopts Interim Name, Image and Likeness Policy.” *NCAA*. 30 June 2021. <https://www.ncaa.org/about/resources/media-center/news/ncaa-adopts-interim-name-image-and-likeness-policy>. Accessed 20 October 2021.

- Clavio, G. & Kian, T. “Uses and Gratifications of a Retired Female Athlete’s Twitter Followers.” *International Journal of Sport Communication*. 2010.
<https://journals.humankinetics.com/view/journals/ijsc/3/4/article-p485.xml>. Accessed 12 October 2021.
- Coca-Cola. “What was the “Share A Coke” Campaign?” *Coca-Cola Company*,
<https://www.coca-colacompany.com/au/faqs/what-was-the-share-a-coke-campaign>.
Accessed 22 September 2020.
- Collier, K. “The Power Behind Alabama Football’s Social Media Strategy.” *Samford University*.
1 November 2019. <https://www.samford.edu/sports-analytics/fans/2019/The-Power-Behind-Alabama-Footballs-Social-Media-Strategy>. Accessed 13 October 2021.
- Cooper, Paige. “25 Twitter Stats All Marketers Need to Know in 2020.” *Hootsuite*. 30 October 2019. <https://blog.hootsuite.com/twitter-statistics/>. Accessed 21 November 2020.
- Dickey, Irene, and Lewis, William. “The Evolution (Revolution) of Social Media and Social Networking as a Necessary Topic in the Marketing Curriculum: A Case for Integrating Social Media into Marketing Classes.” *Department of Management and Marketing*, 2010.
https://ecommons.udayton.edu/mgt_fac_pub/32. Accessed 12 September 2021.
- Digital Intelligence. “P&G Teams Up with Tik Tok Star for #DistanceDance Campaign.” *Digital Strategy Consulting*. 7 April 2020. <https://www.digitalstrategyconsulting.com/online-advertising/online-advertising-research-tips-and-news-for-marketers/>. Accessed 10 October 2020.

- Dimitriu, Radu, and Guesalaga, Rodrigo. "Consumers' Social Media Brand Behaviors: Uncovering Underlying Motivators and Deriving Meaningful Consumer Segments." *Psychology & Marketing*, vol. 34, no. 5, May 2017, pp. 580–592. *EBSCOhost*, doi:10.1002/mar.21007. Accessed 28 June 2021.
- Dittmore, S. "The Constantly Changing World Of Media Content In College Athletics." *Athletic Director U*. <https://www.athleticdirector.com/articles/the-constantly-changing-world-of-media-content-in-college-athletics/>. Accessed 28 October 2021.
- Donders, Karen, and Raymond Boyle. "Public Service Media beyond the Digital Hype: Distribution Strategies in a Platform Era." *Media, Culture & Society*, vol. 41, no. 7, Oct. 2019, pp. 1011–1028. *EBSCOhost*, doi:10.1177/0163443719857616. Accessed 4 July 2021.
- Durmaz, et al. "Travel from Traditional Marketing to Digital Marketing." *Global Journal of Management and Business Research*. 2016.
<https://journalofbusiness.org/index.php/ISSN:%202249-4588>. Accessed 2 November 2021.
- Edosomwan, Simeon, et al. "The history of social media and its impact on business." *Journal of Applied Management and Entrepreneurship*. 2011, vol. 16, pp. 79-91.
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/303216233_The_history_of_social_media_and_its_impact_on_business.

- Fleischer, Rasmus. "Universal Spotification? The Shifting Meanings of 'Spotify' as a Model for the Media Industries." *Popular Communication*, vol. 19, no. 1, Jan. 2021, pp. 14–25. *EBSCOhost*, doi:10.1080/15405702.2020.1744607. Accessed 30 June 2021.
- Fry, Richard. "Millennials Overtake Baby Boomers as America's Largest Generation." *Pew Research Center*. 28 April 2020. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/04/28/millennials-overtake-baby-boomers-as-americas-largest-generation/>. Accessed 24 September 2021.
- Geho, Patrick R., and Jennifer Dangelo. "The Evolution of Social Media as a Marketing Tool for Entrepreneurs." *The Entrepreneurial Executive*, vol. 17, 2012, pp. 61-68. *ProQuest*, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/1037409443?accountid=12104>. Accessed 25 September 2021.
- Geraghty, et al. "The Study of Traditional and Non-traditional Marketing Communications: Target Marketing in the Events Sector." *School of Hospitality Management and Tourism*. June 2016. <https://arrow.tudublin.ie/tfschmtcon>. Accessed 3 November 2021.
- Grebitus, Carola, and Maike Bruhn. "A Way to More Effective Marketing Strategies: Analyzing Dimensionality of Cognitive Structures Quantitatively." *SAGE Open*, July 2011, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/2158244011418380>. Accessed 29 June 2021.
- Green, Mike. "The Impact of Social Networks in the Development of a Personal Sports Brand." *Sport, Business and Management: An International Journal*. July 2016. 10.1108/SBM-09-2015-0032. Accessed 16 November 2020.

Hallbäck, Rasmus. "Social Media in Sports - The Complete Guide To Content Marketing."

Anchor. 10 June 2020. <https://www.anchorportadvisors.com/post/social-media-in-sports-the-complete-guide-to-content-marketing>. Accessed 25 November 2020.

Hudson, S., et al. "The Influence of Social Media Interactions on Consumer–Brand

Relationships: A Three-Country Study of Brand Perceptions and Marketing Behaviors."

Intern. J. of Research in Marketing, 2015.

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/282628990_The_influence_of_social_media_interactions_on_consumer-brand_relationships_A_three-country_study_of_brand_perceptions_and_marketing_behaviors. Accessed 12 November 2020.

Hutchins, et al. "Over-the-Top Sport: Live Streaming Services, Changing Coverage Rights

Markets and the Growth of Media Sport Portals." *Media, Culture & Society*. 20 August

2019. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0163443719857623>. Accessed 27 November 2020.

Kharmalki, et al. "Social Media Marketing in Sports: The Rise of Fan Engagement through

Instagram." *Symbiosis School of Sports Sciences*. November 2020.

https://www.journal.atmph-specialissues.org/uploads/179/8583_pdf.pdf. Accessed 28 October 2021.

Kim, D., et al. "Why Young People use Social Media for Sports: A Uses and Gratifications Perspective." *Indian Journal of Science and Technology*. July 2016.

<https://dx.doi.org/10.17485/ijst/2016/v9i26/97403>. Accessed 21 November 2020.

- Koh, Yoree. "Twitter's First NFL Broadcast Draws Average Audience of 243,000." *The Wall Street Journal*. 16 September 2016. <https://www.wsj.com/articles/twitters-first-nfl-broadcast-wins-compliments-from-viewers-1474049321>. Accessed 20 November 2020.
- Koutelas, Reed. "Las Vegas Golden Knights show NHL teams the perfect social media template." *Digital Sport*. 31 May 2018. <https://digitalsport.co/las-vegas-golden-knights-show-nhl-teams-the-perfect-social-media-template>. Accessed 4 November 2020.
- Lamberton, Cait, and Andrew T. Stephen. "A Thematic Exploration of Digital, Social Media, and Mobile Marketing: Research Evolution from 2000 to 2015 and an Agenda for Future Inquiry." *Journal of Marketing*, vol. 80, no. 6, pp. 146–172. Nov. 2016. *EBSCOhost*, doi:10.1509/jm.15.0415. Accessed 3 October 2021.
- Learmonth, M. "In Bid to Go Global, Cadillac Shifts Advertising Dollars to Digital." *Advertising*, 2012 October, 1-2. 17 July, 2014. <http://adage.com/article/digital/cadillac-shifts-advertising-dollars-digital/237952/>. Accessed 8 October 2021.
- Lee, et al. "The Market Responses to Super Bowl Advertising: The Role of Product Type and Multiple Executions." *Sustainability*. 25 June 2021. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su13137127>. Accessed 3 November 2021.
- Marketing Research Reports. "Top Energy Drink Companies in the U.S." *Marketing Research Reports*. 29 July 2019. Retrieved from <https://www.marketresearchreports.com/blog/2019/07/29/top-energy-drink-companies-us>. Accessed 26 November 2020.

- Martin, et al. "An Analysis of Collegiate Athletic Marketing Strategies and Evaluation Processes." *Journal of Issues in Intercollegiate Athletics*. 2011. http://csri-jiia.org/old/documents/publications/research_articles/2011/JIIA_2011_4_3_42_54_Analysis_of_Collegiate_Athletic_Marketing.pdf. Accessed 10 October 2021.
- McBride, J. "BYU Institutes NIL Policies." *BYU Cougars*. 3 August 2021. <https://byucougars.com/story/athletics/1296873/byu-institutes-nil-policies>. Accessed 21 October 2021.
- Meghamez, J. "An All-Encompassing Primer on Student-Athlete Name, Image, and Likeness Rights and How O'Bannon v. NCAA and Keller v. NCAA Forever Changed College Athletics." *Liberty University Law Review*. January 2015. https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1175&context=lu_law_review. Accessed 20 October 2021.
- Mohsin, Maryam. "10 Tik Tok Statistics that You Need to Know." *Oberlo*. 3 September 2020. <https://www.oberlo.com/blog/tiktok-statistics>. Accessed 9 November 2020.
- Montaquila, A. "Athlete Branding: The Perceived Impact of Establishment and Communication of Collegiate Athlete's Brand Image through Social Media." *Department of Marketing-College of Business*. May 2017. <https://thescholarship.ecu.edu/bitstream/handle/10342/6267/MONTAQUILA-HONORSTHESIS-2017.pdf>. Accessed 20 October 2021.

Murphy, D. "Higher Earning." *ESPN*. 2021.

https://www.espn.com/espn/feature/story/_/id/29388424/how-much-money-college-athletes-make-nil-rights. Accessed 21 October 2021.

Murray, Patrick. "With The Growth Of Esports, NBA 2K League Is Taking Off." *Forbes*. 11 October 2020. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/patrickmurray/2020/10/11/with-the-growth-of-esports-nba-2k-league-is-taking-off/?sh=7bdde82f23b6>. Accessed 21 November 2020.

Paquette, Holly, "Social Media as a Marketing Tool: A Literature Review." *Major Papers by Master of Science Students*. 2013. http://digitalcommons.uri.edu/tmd_major_papers/2. Accessed 4 October 2021.

Pedersen, P. *Routledge Handbook of Sport and New Media*. London, Routledge, 20 January 2014.

Saridakis, Charalampos, et al. "Motivation Recipes for Brand-Related Social Media Use: A Boolean-FsQCA Approach." *Psychology & Marketing*, vol. 33, no. 12, Dec. 2016, pp. 1062–1070. *EBSCOhost*, doi:10.1002/mar.20940. Accessed 8 October 2021.

Scarborough, A. "Sources: Alabama Crimson Tide QB Bryce Young has Already Signed More than \$800K in NIL Deals." *ESPN*. 29 July 2021. https://www.espn.com/college-football/story/_/id/31911674/sources-alabama-crimson-tide-qb-bryce-young-already-signed-800k-nil-deals. Accessed 21 October 2021.

Silverman, Alex. "The Sports Industry's Gen Z Problem." *Morning Consult*. 28 September 2020. <https://morningconsult.com/2020/09/28/gen-z-poll-sports-fandom/>. Accessed 21 November 2020.

Spotify. "Company Information." *For the Record*. 2020.

<https://newsroom.spotify.com/company-info/>. Accessed 27 June 2021.

Staff. "How Branding Communicates School Pride, Culture and Legacy." *AthleticBusiness*. 17

July 2018. [https://www.athleticbusiness.com/facilities/stadium-](https://www.athleticbusiness.com/facilities/stadium-arena/article/15154556/how-branding-communicates-school-pride-culture-and-legacy)

[arena/article/15154556/how-branding-communicates-school-pride-culture-and-legacy](https://www.athleticbusiness.com/facilities/stadium-arena/article/15154556/how-branding-communicates-school-pride-culture-and-legacy).

Accessed 21 October 2021.

Statista. "Number of Social Network Users Worldwide from 2010 to 2021 (in billions)." *The*

Statistic Portal. 2018. <https://www.statista.com/>. Accessed 2 July 2021.

Statista. "Dollar Sales of Leading Frozen Pizza Brands in the United States in 2019 (in million

U.S. Dollars)." *The Statistic Portal*. 2019. <https://www.statista.com/>. Accessed 11

November 2020.

Stevens, et al. *Sport Marketing Among Colleges & Universities*. 1995.

Taylor, Alistair. "Keeping with the Times: Sports Plays Catch-Up with Younger Digital

Audiences." *MIDiA Research*. 27 January 2020. [www.midiaresearch.com/blog/keeping-](http://www.midiaresearch.com/blog/keeping-with-the-times-sports-plays-catch-up-with-younger-digital-audiences)

[with-the-times-sports-plays-catch-up-with-younger-digital-audiences](http://www.midiaresearch.com/blog/keeping-with-the-times-sports-plays-catch-up-with-younger-digital-audiences). Accessed 22

September 2020.

Twitter Marketing. "It's Delivery...it's DiGiorno." *Twitter Marketing Case Study*. 2019.

<https://marketing.twitter.com/>. Accessed 28 September 2020.

Voorn, R. J., & Kommers, P. A. "Social Media and Higher Education: Introversion and

Collaborative Learning from the Student's Perspective." *International Journal of Social*

Media and Interactive Learning Environments, 2013. vol. 1, pp. 59-73.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1504/IJSMILE.2013.051650>. Accessed 12 October 2021.

Voorveld, et al. “Brand Communication in Social Media: A Research Agenda.” *Journal of Advertising*, 2019, vol. 48, pp. 14-26.

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/00913367.2019.1588808>. Accessed 3 October 2021.

Wallaroo Media. “TikTok Statistics.” *Wallaroo*, 22 September 2020.

<https://wallaroomedia.com/blog/social-media/tiktok-statistics/>.

Wang, et. al., “The Relationships Among Community Experience, Community Commitment, Brand Attitude, and Purchase Intention in Social Media.” *International Journal of Information Management*, 2019, vol. 49, pp. 475-488.

<https://ur.booksc.me/book/76878617/b2f1f5>. Accessed 22 June 2021.

YAC. “12 Traditional Marketing Tactics with Surprisingly High ROIs.” *HubSpot*. 1 July 2021.

<https://blog.hubspot.com/agency/12-traditional-marketing-tactics-with-surprisingly-high-roids>. Accessed 2 November 2021.

Žák, Štefan & Hasprová, Mária. “The Role of Influencers in the Consumer Decision-Making Process.” *SHS Web of Conferences*. January 2020. *10.1051/shsconf/20207403014*.

Accessed 23 September 2020.

Zilles, Christian. “How Social Media’s Impact on Sports Will Continue to Grow.” *SocialMedia HQ*. 20 September 2019. <https://socialmediahq.com/how-social-medias-impact-on-sports-will-continue-to-grow/>.

Accessed 30 October 2020.

“On the Cusp of Adulthood and Facing an Uncertain Future: What We Know About Gen Z So Far.” *Pew Research Center*. 14 May 2020. <https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2020/05/14/on-the-cusp-of-adulthood-and-facing-an-uncertain-future-what-we-know-about-gen-z-so-far-2/>. Accessed 12 October 2021.