

# Chapter 25

## Digital Media and Sports Advertising

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### ABSTRACT

*Advertising and sponsorship in the area of sports continue to be a prominent way for companies to receive brand exposure to a desired target audience and obtain a brand association with a popular entity. The fundamental advantages of advertising and sponsorship in sports now combine with digital media to provide more extensive and unique opportunities for companies to promote their brands and potentially better connect with their customers. It is clear that digital media do not replace more traditional forms of sports advertising and sponsorship, but rather represent additional vehicles for promotional communication. This chapter begins by providing an explanation of the goals and advantageous characteristics of a sports sponsorship for a company. This review is necessary because developing an agreement with the sports property is required for sponsors to obtain exclusive rights to content (footage of that sport), and logos they could use on their product packaging or in their advertisements to better communicate a brand association. The chapter then offers four examples of companies using digital media to execute their sponsorships with sports properties: Sprite and the NBA, Verizon and the NFL, AT&T and the Masters Golf Tournament, and Wise Snack Foods and the Boston Red Sox and New York Mets. A fifth example looks at how sponsors are using another prominent media destination for the sports audience, ESPN. The chapter reveals the endless possibilities of what a sponsorship using digital media can include in the area of sports.*

### INTRODUCTION

It can be said that every time the technological communication environment changes and causes the mass media use of the audience to change,

so too does the advertising industry. While the technology has changed, the ultimate goal of advertising has not. The most general objective of any advertisement is to persuade (e.g., Leckenby & Stout, 1985; O'Guinn, Allen, & Semenik, 2006; Tellis, 2004). However, understanding what

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determines the effectiveness of advertising as a persuasive form of communication continues to be an issue raised by many scholars (e.g., Tellis, 2004; Till & Baack, 2005) and an obvious concern of all practitioners.

As audiences are provided with a multitude of communication vehicles to experience media content, advertisers simply need to be in the locations where their brands will be noticed by their desired target audiences. Bellamy and Traudt (2000) explain the necessity of brand exposure as “the fundamental concept is that a recognizable brand will more easily attract and retain customers than an unrecognizable one” (p. 127). In addition to the advertising placement to obtain brand exposure, some scholars indicate the message content of an advertisement can influence the audience’s ability to better remember the brand name and to get them to think favorably about the advertised brand that can ultimately lead them to purchase the brand (e.g., Kelley & Turley, 2004; Till & Baack, 2005). The achievement of persuasion through advertising needs to combine the strategic placement and the proper message content to best create the desired effect. Fortunato and Dunnam (2004) thus describe any advertising strategy as having three specific goals: (1) obtaining exposure to the desired target audience, (2) increasing product brand recall, and (3) increasing consumer behavior (i.e., purchasing the brand).

Achievement of these persuasive advertising goals is, however, much more complicated in the current technological communication environment. Advertisers need to adapt to the technology and understand that digital media offer opportunities to better connect their brands with the consumer. For sports advertising digital media prominently include the Internet, both the company’s own website and placement on the websites of leagues, teams, or sports media companies (i.e., ESPN or Sports Illustrated), hand-held wireless devices, and integration of advertising into video games. DeFleur and Dennis (2002) describe digital media as “the product of

‘convergence,’ the coming together of all forms of communication into a unified, electronically based, computer-driven system” (p. 215). They add digital media are interactive and involve “digital storage of information, its retrieval and dissemination” (p. 215). Bianco (2004) contends interactivity and a more precise measurement of the message’s impact are the two advantages of advertising on the Internet instead of traditional mass media. He explains the interactive capability “enables marketers to gather reams of invaluable personal information directly from customers and adjust their sales pitch accordingly, in some cases in real time” (p. 65). O’Guinn, Allen, and Semeniuk (2006) summarize that prominent among the advantages for advertisers in using digital media are: target market selectivity, tracking, deliverability and flexibility, and interactivity (p. 572).

The area of sports remains a viable advertising vehicle to achieve brand exposure, especially to the desirable, and relatively hard-to-reach, male audience between the ages of 18 and 49 (e.g., Wenner, 1989). Wenner (1989) points out that “media organizations buy and sell sport much as they do any other news or entertainment commodity. The content per se is not what is being sold; rather it is the audience for that content that is being sold to advertisers” (p. 22). In speaking specifically about the advantage of advertising during sports television programming in relation to the competitive advertising environment, Bellamy (1998) adds that, “with a seemingly endless proliferation of television channels, sport is seen as the programming that can best break through the clutter of channels and advertising and consistently produce a desirable audience for sale to advertisers” (p. 73).

Another important variable in addition to the demographic characteristics in evaluating advertising in the area of sports is the nature of the sports audience. Sloan (1989) contends the term *fan*, short for fanatic, is more descriptive for people who watch sports, rather than describing them as merely spectators or viewers. For fans,

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