

Sports & Entertainment Marketing

Unit Ten Outline, 2020-21 School Year

Unit 10:

The Spectator “Fan” Experience

OVERVIEW

Unit ten discusses the importance of game operations and game entertainment. The fundamental concept of game operations and entertainment is the way “breaks” in an event or game (half-time, time-outs etc.) are perceived by sports marketer as “opportunities”. The game operations process begins before any of the games are played when sports marketers identify the additional entertainment that will be added to the event to keep the audience involved and entertained.

OBJECTIVES

- 1) Describe the concept of the fan/spectator experience
 - 2) Define the term game operations
 - 3) Identify five elements of game entertainment
 - 4) Explain what is meant by “game attractiveness” and how it influences attendance
 - 5) Explain why game operations are important to a sports organization
 - 6) Describe the relationship between game operations and other functions of the organization
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LESSONS

Lesson 10.1 The Spectator (Fan) Experience

Lesson 10.2 What are Game Operations?

Lesson 10.3 The Role of Game Operations in Sports Marketing

KEY TERMS

Game Attractiveness

Game Operations

Lesson 10.1

The Spectator (Fan) Experience

*** INSTRUCTOR'S NOTE ***



Before introducing the concept of the spectator/fan experience, ask your students to think about the last time they attended a sporting event, concert or other form of entertainment. Encourage them to think about the experience as a whole, not simply the entertainment itself. All of those factors, ranging from parking to concessions, impact the overall fan experience. Also, ask students if they know when the fan experience begins and ends.

- A. The spectator or fan experience as it relates to live events refers to the overall impression made on the sports or entertainment consumer
 - 1. It can determine whether the spectator or fan has a positive or negative experience at the game or event
 - 2. Positive or negative associations with the game or event ultimately determine whether the spectator (fan) will become a repeat customer
 - 3. How important is the spectator/fan experience?
 - a. According to sportstechie.com, the Golden State Warriors were more focused on fan experience than dazzling new technologies when designing their new arena (the Golden 1 Center), despite being called the “most technologically advanced and sustainable arena in the world”,
 - i. Said team President and COO, Rick Welts, “We’re trying to focus 100 percent on the fan experience where technology enables that, great. The mission is to provide the best fan experience that’s ever been provided before. We want technology to be additive, but it’s not the be-all, end-all by any means.”
- B. When does the spectator or fan experience begin?
 - 1. The fan experience begins the moment when a consumer begins thinking about purchasing a ticket to a game or event while the game or event day experience begins as the consumer travels to and arrives at the event
 - a. If a fan has a difficult time navigating a website trying to purchase tickets to a game or event, the experience has already started on a sour note
 - b. A negative experience finding parking, paying for parking or dealing with an unfriendly parking lot attendant can sour the consumer on the entire experience, even before setting foot in the stadium or arena
 - i. Realizing this, MLB’s Atlanta Braves implemented several measures to help alleviate fan frustrations over simply getting to the stadium ¹
 - (a) Based on a comprehensive traffic study, the team pushed back the starting time of their 7pm games to 7:30pm, when most of the area traffic has cleared
 - (b) The Braves also increased the number of stadium entry points to 14 (vs the previous 2), built 360-degreeparking around the ballpark, added three

pedestrian bridges and more overall parking spaces, a bike valet and new ridesharing pick-up and drop-off locations

- (i) Braves President of Development Mike Plant told the [Atlanta Business Chronicle](#): “We recognize that traffic in the Atlanta area is an issue, and certainly has been a key frustration before and after ball games. The combination of tremendous infrastructure improvements, 360-degree access to the ballpark, pre-and post-game activities, and our new start time will make travel to and from SunTrust Park a better experience for our fans.”
- c. High levels of traffic congestion arriving or leaving the venue could negate an otherwise entirely positive experience at the event, impacting whether the consumer would choose to attend again
 - i. At an inaugural NASCAR event in Kentucky, traffic began backing up on the only main road into the track nine hours before the start of the race, and by late afternoon there were reportedly backups of as many as 10 miles in either direction. After 100 laps, cars still were exiting the interstate when traffic patterns were reversed. It was estimated that at least 15,000 fans didn't reach the event.²
 - ii. To improve the game day experience for fans, the Atlanta Braves bumped back weekday start times to 7:30, dispersed parking options and encouraged more fans to buy tickets and parking in advance
 - (a) The team also received investments from the city of Atlanta to improve roads, pedestrian bridges and shuttle services³
 - iii. According to a survey published in the *Sports Business Journal* (conducted by Turnkey Sports), the top three biggest fan complaints about parking at sporting events included:⁴
 - (a) Time required to exit after the event (50%)
 - (b) Cost (31%)
 - (c) Lack of available parking near the stadium/venue (9%)
 - iv. To pro-actively manage their traffic situation, the Brooklyn Nets worked with a traffic engineering expert to identify potential solutions for minimizing congestion on days when the newly minted Barclays Center would be hosting events
 - (a) The solution was to discourage driving entirely, by cutting the number of parking spaces at the Barclays Center in half⁵
 - v. The Miami Dolphins partnered with Uber to help ease game day congestion by offering fans a dedicated drop off and pick up spot in the team's parking lot, a private tailgate section (complete with game day supplies), and the ability to book a ride from the team's app
 - vi. According to the [Sports Business Journal](#), executives at Madison Square Garden prioritize the efficiency of getting fans in and out of the building. To help ease congestion, they opened additional entrances on the backside of the arena last season.
 - vii. In 2020, prior to the pandemic, the New England Patriots announced a solution for helping to ease some of the traffic pressure that has been a common complaint of Patriots fans leaving games at Gillette Stadium
 - (a) The team [announced](#) the stadium will now feature a “delayed exit lot” that allows fans to park for free. However, vehicles parked in that area will not be allowed to leave until 75 minutes after the game ends
 - viii. According to [Geek Wire](#), the expansion NHL Seattle Kraken will be investing up to a \$7 million in the city's monorail system with a plan to offer free transit rides to ticket holders on game days
 - ix. One of the biggest challenges facing sports and entertainment business professionals when fans are allowed back in stadiums, ballparks and arenas is

how to safely keep fans moving and spaced apart given the health concerns associated with the pandemic, beginning with the parking and tailgating experience

- d. With so much competition for the entertainment dollar, much pressure is on a sports or entertainment organization to create positive spectator/fan experience

*** INSTRUCTOR'S NOTE ***



Now would be a great time to engage students in a quick discussion. To enhance the discussion in class, consider passing out the student handout marked "Lesson 10.1 - Student Handout - Fan Experience." The handout provides the complete results from the survey referenced above as it relates to traffic and parking and sporting events. Ask students if they agree with any of the complaints and whether they have any other gripes about the overall fan or game/event day experience from events they have attended in the past.

C. How do organizations manage, control and enhance the fan experience?

1. Technology

- a. When it comes to security related issues and combating unruly fans, many teams and organizations offer "text" lines in which fans could report obnoxious behavior by sending a text message to team security
 - i. At the average NFL game, about 3 people are arrested and 25 more are ejected⁶
 - (a) Every NFL team now offers some form of a text or cell phone hotline to report disruptive fan behavior
 - ii. At most major NCAA college football games, fans can use their mobile devices to send a text message to security with a description of their problem and their location. From there, officials can respond and use security cameras to zoom in on the section in question.⁷
 - iii. In 2018, Safeco Field and CenturyLink Field in Seattle [introduced](#) a biometric security system in which fans use their fingerprints to validate their age and purchase alcohol to help monitor purchases and (potentially) manage consumption
 - iv. Organizers of the Tokyo Olympic Games [announced](#) that facial recognition technology will be in place in time for the 2020 Summer Games to help with overall security and the safety of fans braving potentially hot and humid conditions at Olympic venues
 - v. In 2018, entrepreneur Elon Musk proposed plans to build a high-speed, zero-emissions, underground public transportation system to take fans in Los Angeles to Dodgers stadium from East Hollywood to drastically reduce commute times
 - (a) Click [here](#) for more on the idea from USA Today

- vi. According to a report from [The Athletic](#), Mercedes-Benz Stadium, home to the Atlanta Falcons and Atlanta United, Tropicana Field (home to the Tampa Bay Rays) and Tottenham FC's new London mega-stadium all went cashless in 2019
 - (a) The Super Bowl and Wimbledon are already reportedly making plans to go "cashless", a trend likely to gain traction with venues around the world
- b. Apps can help fans get the most out of the spectator experience
 - i. When Las Vegas Motor Speedway did research on the fan experience, parking came back as an area that needed improvement. As a result, LVMS worked with a technology company to create a "fan guide" app that takes consumers into the track and to their seats through information delivered to a smartphone.
 - (a) At a speedway as large as Las Vegas, which seats 140,000 fans, parking in the wrong lot or entering through the wrong gate can lead to long delays entering the stadium and finding seats so the app helps prevent confusion by providing the easiest route to a parking space and to the fan's seat. ⁸
 - ii. When it opened its doors to a brand-new football stadium, Baylor University introduced an In-Game App, making it the first college athletics application to provide instant replays from multiple views to fans, right at their seats, at McLane Stadium. ⁹
 - iii. In 2018, the New York Red Bulls [integrated](#) Lyft (one of the team's corporate partners) service into the team's new mobile app and integrated maps to help fans driving get to Red Bull Arena more efficiently
 - (a) The app has a regular mode and an "arena mode", each mode featuring exclusive content, based on where the fan is using their mobile device
 - iv. The Golden State Warriors will launch a new app in 2019-20 featuring technology that allows fans to purchase merchandise onsite and have it delivered to their seats, have it available at the team store for pickup after the game, or have it shipped
- c. Stadium amenities are designed to improve the overall spectator/fan experience
 - i. Many sports teams have installed High-Definition jumbo screens at stadiums for the best possible viewing of replays and to allow fans in the upper level seating areas to get closer to the action
 - (a) AT&T stadium, which plays host to the NFL's Dallas Cowboys and an array of other events, boasts one of the most impressive jumbotrons in the world. The two sideline displays measure 160 feet wide and 72 feet tall, measuring from one 20-yard to the other 20-yard line.
 - (i) It would take almost 5,000 52" flat panel TVs to equal the size, it contains 30 million light bulbs, weighs 1.2 million pounds and cost roughly \$40 million.
 - 1. Click [here](#) for other fun stats on the world's largest 1080p video board
 - (b) *Sports Business Journal* [reports](#) that the Colorado Rockies, in celebration of the team's 25th season as a MLB franchise, installed a new scoreboard that was shaped like a mountain range, 258 percent larger than the previous board and paired with a new sound system
 - ii. Venue upgrades and new construction often focus on viewing angles and improving sightlines to ensure fans can see the action no matter where they are sitting or standing
 - (a) Last year, TPC Sawgrass (a PGA Tour golf course in Florida) underwent a 6-month \$50 million renovation with a goal of improving the fan experience – enhancements included:
 - (i) A shaded bleacher area with sight lines to multiple holes
 - (ii) Food and dining areas that feature local cuisine

- (iii) An improved grand entrance-way, highlighting the grandiose main clubhouse
 - (iv) New mounding around a number of holes giving fans an elevated and less obstructed view of the action
 - 1. Click [here](#) for a brief video from the PGA Tour's website
- iii. Interactive technologies
 - (a) Mobile devices are not allowed at the PGA's U.S. Open, but fans onsite can still utilize social media through onsite CourseLink kiosks that enable visitors to use Twitter, take photos and share personalized messages through Facebook and Foursquare ¹⁰
 - (b) American Express introduced an innovative feature at a PGA Tour event with a program dubbed the "Course Curator," which enables Amex cardholders to customize their experience at the golf tournament by guiding them through the course and helping them to find their favorite golfers. "This has the potential to really change the golf-day experience for fans," said Barry Hyde, the USGA's chief marketing officer in an interview with the *Sports Business Journal*. ¹¹
 - (c) The Minnesota Twins feature a "[Tweet Board](#)" at Target Field, which shares tweets from Twins games via a large video board with the crowd during games
 - (d) The San Francisco Giants opened a sports "social media" café (called the "[@Cafe](#)") inside AT&T Park behind the centerfield wall where fans can view their own social media content from Twitter and Instagram on six, 55-inch screens, all while enjoying some coffee, recharging a smartphone and following "worldwide social media chatter about the team, players and all things Giants and Major League Baseball"
 - (e) In 2018, the Nashville Predators [introduced](#) an interactive "social green-screen board", allowing fans to pick different backdrops and take photos with friends with the photo being sent directly to their social media accounts
- iv. In-seat technology
 - (a) Minor league baseball's Round Rock Express offer a service that allows fans to order and pay for food and drinks from their smartphones. When the order is ready, a text message is sent back to the fan. Then, they pick it up at one of four stations at the stadium and skip waiting in line. ¹²
 - (i) Taking it one step further, fans attending New York Yankees and Dallas Cowboys games can now order food and drinks in their seats from a mobile app *and* have it delivered
 - (b) The San Francisco 49ers [launched an app](#) to be used at Levi's Stadium that can steer fans to the bathrooms and concessions with the shortest lines and the fastest routes out of parking lots.
- v. Ticketing technology
 - (a) The Golden State Warriors now give fans the ability to upgrade their seats *during* the game using mobile devices, helping them to improve customer service and generating additional revenue while helping to move unsold ticket inventory ¹³
 - (b) Prior to kicking off the 2019-20 NFL season, the University of California Golden Bears introduced a new ticketing system, aimed at improving the overall fan experience ¹⁴
 - (i) After analyzing data, the team recognized that most non-season ticket game attendees purchase seats last-minute, whether through the athletics department or secondary market

- (ii) The “buy-as-you-go” system ensures fans get the best seats available without having to shop online, comparing ticket prices or spending time looking at seat locations
- d. Fan health and safety and protecting the team from liability
 - i. How might technology impact the fan experience in a post-pandemic world?
 - ii. [*Sports Business Journal*](#) offered a look at how technology might play a role in how sports and entertainment business professionals keep fans healthy and safe at venues throughout the industry
 - (a) Security / Liability
 - (i) Beginning with the purchase of a ticket on the app, fans would be presented with a liability waiver that assures the team that would release the team from liability should the fan contract any virus at the venue
 - (ii) The app would also provide fans with gate and security line assignments, and a range of times to arrive to venue entry points
 - (iii) Upon arrival, fans would receive temperature checks and be asked health screening questions prior to having their ticket scanned
 - (iv) Fans could then receive a Bluetooth-enabled device that they would be required to wear at all times while they are at the game that would allow stadium staff to track fan movement and help maintain safe social-distancing measures
 - (b) Cleaning and Sanitization
 - (i) Stadiums could consider the implementation of technology that can detect concealed weapons and crowd disturbances from parking lots to the seating bowl. It can also detect thermal elevated body temperature, lack of social distancing and perform contact tracing, which can help identify those who may have come in contact with an infected person.
 - (ii) Technology that can help sanitize venues will most certainly play a role in fan safety, along with improved equipment that can improve air quality at venues
 - 1. For example, technology called bipolar ionization that significantly improves air quality at venues, was incorporated into the \$185 million renovation of Rocket Mortgage FieldHouse and is in the Texas Rangers’ new ballpark, Globe Life Park



Consider assigning a slight variation of the existing “Stadium Project” (located in the “Activities and Projects” folder) here. Rather than asking them to come up with a stadium development strategy, position this as a capital improvement project. Instead of building a new venue, task them with focusing on upgrades to an existing facility.

How might technology play a role in the improvements? What ticket sales concepts from unit 9 might translate to this project? How might they be able to improve the overall fan experience with a stadium upgrade strategy?

*** INSTRUCTOR'S NOTE ***



A PDF document entitled “Unit 10 Student Handout – StadiumsRaceToDigitize” provides an excellent case study on ways venues and facilities are scrambling to implement technology to keep pace with fan demands. It could be used as a supplement to this lesson (or unit as a whole) in many ways, either as a case study, discussion topic, activity or even extra credit!

2. Proactively controlling environment
 - a. Monitoring alcohol consumption
 - i. Less than 40 of the roughly 120 largest NCAA Division 1 schools allow the sale of alcohol inside their stadiums and many limit sales to luxury suites, lounges or club-seating areas ¹⁵
 - ii. Many teams staff members in place dedicated to monitoring tweets and gauging fan behavior on game days to help prevent issues from arising
 - iii. Because of the increase in complaints about intoxicated patrons disrupting fellow fans' viewing of the game, the Los Angeles Dodgers took the drastic step of placing a ban on tailgating prior to all home games ¹⁶
 - (a) Organizations can gain a better understanding of fan behavior prior to an event taking place and make adjustments to staffing accordingly. For example, statistically Boston Bruins fans consume 30 percent more alcohol at the Boston Garden than Celtics fans do. As a result, management at the arena may choose to implement measures that can help them to proactively manage a potentially rowdier crowd. ¹⁷
 - iv. Much to the disappointment of fans who enjoyed a slightly different atmosphere at a PGA sanctioned golf event, the Tour [imposed a ban](#) at the Waste Management Phoenix Open on players throwing things to fans (previously a tournament tradition) as a means for improving both player and fan safety at the event
 - v. 2019, the Buffalo Bills [announced](#) changes in their tailgating policy, requiring fans who arrive on buses with plans to tailgate to purchase a package along with their parking pass
 - (a) To better manage the experience, the franchise created a "Tailgate Village" which charges around \$15 per person for fans that want to tailgate in the designated area, hoping the addition of the fee will keep unruly fans from the stadium
 - (b) The team's vice president of operations and guest experience explained the decision to the [Buffalo News](#): "Our No. 1 concern as an organization is fan safety. When you're seeing what was happening in the bus lot the last couple seasons, especially last year, it gets very concerning. It's dangerous behavior, not just negative fan behavior. It's dangerous to security, the sheriffs and staff who are trying to police things."

- b. Fan safety
 - i. Understanding the intense rivalry between fans of the Portland Timbers and Seattle Sounders, management for both respective MLS clubs limited the number of tickets available for sale to the opposing team at its home games (seating all opposing fans in a section inaccessible to home fans) in an effort to curtail any potential confrontations during the game
 - ii. This season, the Chicago White Sox became the first MLB team to extend protective netting all the way from one foul pole to the other to better protect fans from the risk of being hit by foul balls
 - (a) The Washington Nationals also debuted an extended protective netting in 2019, but not covering as much area as the White Sox netting
- c. Lines and wait times
 - i. It is incumbent upon an organization to consider factors like parking and lines for bathrooms and concessions as part of the overall fan experience while developing strategies for improving those dynamics at events
 - (a) For example, Arrowhead Stadium (home to the NFL's Kansas City Chiefs) recently renovated the stadium to expand the concourse to reduce congestion, increase the number of concessions stands (and diversify the food offerings), and add more bathrooms, all with the intent of improving the overall fan experience
 - (b) Recognizing that long lines at concessions areas have a negative impact on the fan experience (and reduces potential for maximizing sales), food providers are now exploring creative advances in technology for self-serve concessions stations and using research data to support the reconfiguration of food stands in stadiums
 - (i) According to a study released in 2019, 72% of U.S. sports fans typically buy food when attending a game and 76% buy a drink yet lines at concessions lines restrict the ability to maximize food and beverage sales: 59% of respondents of the same survey said they would spend more on food and drinks if teams and venues could improve speed of service ¹⁸
 - (ii) Mercedes-Benz Stadium, home to the NFL Atlanta Falcons, which opened in 2017, features 670 different concessions locations (65% more than what the team had in the Georgia Dome) to help provide easier access for hungry fans
 - 1. Concessions cost an exact dollar amount, so fans don't have to deal with coins and soda refill stations will be self-serve and separate from ordering lines
 - 2. Falcons owner Arthur Blank said the aim was to produce a "unique fan experience" that would allow game attendees to focus on the game and not become frustrated with concession inconveniences
 - (iii) This season, the Los Angeles Dodgers [debuted](#) the services of "Flippy", a burger flipping robot, to help the kitchen staff quickly prepare foods ranging from burgers to tater tots and fried chicken
 - 1. Click [here](#) for a YouTube video of "Flippy" in action
 - (iv) The New York Mets [unveiled](#) a new bio-tech enabled self-checkout feature at Citi Field last season, enabling fans to purchase concessions items at kiosks with a single touch

- d. Every detail is important, including the gameday sights and sounds that influence the overall fan experience
 - i. The Seattle Seahawks game day staff includes a combination of engineers, directors, producers, editors and more in a “control room” with the sole responsibility of enhancing the gameday experience
 - (a) According to [Geekwire](#), the staff is responsible for showing different angles of live action, instant replays, highlights from other games, advertisements, and miscellaneous video content before, during and after the game
 - ii. Managing the game or event day environment is challenging because not all fans want the exact same experience
 - (a) For example, Notre Dame, who have sold out every home football game dating back to 1973, struggles to find ways to appease a fan base that is conflicted as to whether they should sit or stand throughout the game
 - (i) Click [here](#) to see how the University trains stadium ushers to handle the situation on game days
 - iii. In 2018, the Baltimore Ravens dropped concessions prices to include \$3 hot dogs and \$6 burgers, recognizing the influence affordability can have on the overall fan experience
 - (a) The [Baltimore Sun](#) reports that the new “Flock Friendly Fare” initiative lowered prices on 21 of the most popular menu items with an average decrease of 33 percent while favorites like pretzels and fries were reduced by 53 percent. No single item was listed at over \$9 as part of the team’s new effort to create a more affordable game day experience.
 - iv. Failure to proactively control the environment and manage the experience can result in a shift in consumer perceptions
 - (a) After a parking lot shooting following a San Francisco 49ers and Oakland Raiders pre-season game in 2011, USA Today conducted a poll online, asking fans whether stadium violence would impact their decision to attend a game. 35% of participants responded that it would. ¹⁹
 - (b) After several injuries (including two deaths), Major League Baseball faced a lot of scrutiny for their stadium safety regulations
 - (i) In 2018 the league responded, announcing all 30 Major League Baseball teams extended the protective netting at ballparks to help protect fans in field level seats from low-flying foul balls and broken bats
- e. Communicating expectations for fan behavior
 - i. NFL commissioner Roger Goodell issued of a “Code of Fan Conduct” policy which prohibits, among other things, “unruly, disruptive, or illegal” behavior; “drunkenness” resulting in “irresponsible” behavior; and “foul or abusive language or obscene gestures.” The code also proscribes “verbal or physical” harassment of opposing teams’ fans. ²⁰
 - (a) The NFL extended the policy even further, requiring any fan who gets kicked out of an NFL stadium for unruly behavior to take a \$75 four-hour online class and pass a [code-of-conduct test](#) before being allowed to attend another NFL game
 - ii. NBA arenas, like the Moda Center in Portland, Oregon, have the league’s “Fan Code of Conduct” posted in many locations around the building
 - iii. Most organizations will also post expectations of fan conduct on their websites
 - (a) Click [here](#) to see Major League Soccer’s fan code of conduct policy
 - (b) Click [here](#) to see the Denver Bronco’s RESPECT: Fan Code of Conduct
- f. After the COVID-19 pandemic, industry professionals expect fans will see a vastly different approach to how organizations manage the overall spectator experience

- i. The “new normal” at sports stadiums around the world could include fan safety features like temperature checks and staggered entry at the gate, cashless concessions, and touchless ticketing
 - (a) According to [Sports Business Journal](#), fans could even receive specially issued coronavirus immunity cards with a separate entrance that allows them to bypass lines that typically form at the gate
 - (b) Industry professionals also project that an entirely new industry segment could be created if teams and organizations if and when infectious disease specialists were required to be on staff while sanitization experts would need to be consulted at venues to insure fan and player/staff safety at arenas, stadiums and ballparks
 - (i) By May of 2020, the NBA had already begun instructing its franchises to assign a training facility hygiene officer role as teams looked to return to practice facilities
- 3. Game Operations
 - a. Game operations provide an effective vehicle for an organization to manage, control and enhance the fan experience
 - i. The Green Bay Packers game-day staff is heralded for creating one of the best atmospheres in all of sports, and their strategic game day plan is detailed down to every minute of the game
 - (a) Click [here](#) to see more about how the Packers plan for game days from the *Green Bay Press-Gazette*
- 4. Several rankings are published each year with opinions on the best fan and/or stadium experience
 - a. Click [here](#) to see which NBA arenas offer the best fan experience, according to fans (via Business Insider)
 - b. Click [here](#) to read “From the dumps to the best game-day experiences the league can offer, here is Sporting News' ranking of all 31 NFL stadiums” at SportingNews.com.

Lesson 10.2

What are Game Operations?

- A. The term **game operations** refers to the planning, organization and execution of game production, presentation, entertainment and promotion
1. The game operations process begins in the creative minds of sports marketing professionals before any games are played
 2. This process includes the development of a game plan for incorporating all the elements of game entertainment
 - a. National Anthem
 - b. Pre-game groups
 - c. Half-time entertainment
 - d. Execution of promotions
 - e. Dance team and stunt team integration
 - f. Mascot coordination
 - g. Managing any additional entertainment such as in-arena blimps
 3. The role of game entertainment in the sports business model is two-fold
 - a. Enhance the experience for the fans while keeping them involved throughout the entire event
 - i. Erik Spanberg of the [*Sports Business Journal*](#) explains in a post on sportsbusinessdaily.com: *"Now more than ever, fans want to be entertained throughout each step of game day. And much of what they want is a place to gather; to see and be seen. A place to sip on custom cocktails and craft beers; to munch on traditional and nontraditional snacks; to listen to a DJ or live music and then glance up at television screens showing highlights and broadcasts of other games in progress. If they can't have all of that, and comfortably, then they'll go to a sports bar or stay home and have a party with friends while watching the main event on a 70-inch, high-definition TV."*
 - b. The show actually starts hours before the game when the events that will take place are scripted out and shared with anyone who will be a part of the process, whether it is a mascot skit, a promotion during a break in the action or pre-game announcements read by the public address announcer
 - c. Game entertainment creates opportunities to generate revenue by adding additional valuable inventory to include as part of sponsorship packages
 - i. It also helps generate revenue by helping to sell more tickets
 4. Game day staff
 - a. To execute and implement each element of the game operations plan, an organization typically has a game day staff in place
 - b. The Boston Red Sox staff features a General Manager of in-game entertainment who is responsible for overseeing a crew that includes a DJ to run the music, seven people to edit the replays and type out the graphics that appear on the video scoreboard, two additional people who control an additional video board and four people running video cameras around the park ²¹
 - c. Software programs like "Sound Director" and Total Sports Entertainment's "Game Time Pro" make it easier for teams to manage game operations and entertainment
- B. Why are game operations important?
1. Successful game operations can help the organization achieve its goals
 - a. Driving ticket sales
 - b. Increasing sponsorship sales opportunities
 - c. Generating publicity

- i. To generate buzz for a home game, the Minnesota Wild brought in a member of the St. Paul SWAT team to rappel from the ceiling and drop the ceremonial puck
- d. Assisting in customer service
- e. Enhancing the overall event experience, regardless of the game's outcome
- 2. Game operations also provide game attractiveness ²²
 - a. **Game attractiveness** refers to the customer's perception of the event as a whole
 - b. Game attractiveness is a situational factor that varies from game to game and week to week
 - c. Event variables that contribute to game attractiveness
 - i. Highly visible star athletes (Bryce Harper, Aaron Rodgers, Skylar Diggins-Smith, Alex Ovechkin, etc.)
 - ii. Team record / opponent record
 - iii. Opening day
 - iv. Giveaways
 - v. Presence of mascots, dance teams and cheerleaders
 - (a) According to a *SportsBusiness Journal* survey, all but 20 of the 122 teams in the NFL, NBA, NHL and MLB have at least one mascot character, collectively they have a total of 166 characters (racing sausages, pierogies and big-headed retired players) while the 106 affiliated Minor League Baseball clubs that responded reported 192 mascot characters ²³
 - (b) In 2014, the [Cleveland Browns](#) made the decision to introduce a live dog (a bullmastiff) named "Swagger" as a mascot after years of having a costumed mascot at games

*** DISCUSSION IDEA / TRIVIA ***



Trivia #1: Few NFL teams have live animal mascots. In fact, other than the Cleveland Browns, just four other teams have them: The Seattle Seahawks with Taima the Hawk, the Denver Broncos' horse named Thunder II, the Baltimore Ravens and their two ravens, Rise and Conquer, and the Kansas City Chiefs' horse, Warpaint.

Trivia #2: Just two North American teams have real, human mascots (not in a caricature costume). Who are they? Ragnar, the Minnesota Vikings mascot and Lucky the Leprechaun of the Boston Celtics.

*** INSTRUCTOR'S NOTE ***



For some added classroom fun, play the PowerPoint “Great Mascot Challenge” game with your students. You can find it in the “Games and Classroom Fun” folder.

- vi. Prominent half time entertainment (Blues Brothers, The Extreme Dunk Team, Quick Change etc.)
- vii. Pre and post-game concerts
- viii. T-shirt canons
- ix. Fireworks and other entertainment
- x. Quality/variety of concessions items
 - (a) Many teams have introduced outlandish concessions items as a way to increase game attractiveness (and generate publicity), including the Washington Nationals (8 pound “[Strasburger](#)”), the Charlotte Motor Speedway ([deep-fried cupcakes](#), funnel cakes topped with chocolate sauce and chopped bacon), the Texas Rangers (“[The Champion](#)”, a \$26 hot dog weighing in at 2 pounds) and several minor league teams like the Camden RiverSharks offering “[Krispy Kreme](#)” burgers
 - (i) The top selling hot dog at Oriole Park at Camden Yards in Baltimore comes topped with crab macaroni and cheese
 - (ii) The Nationals’ stadium also features a unique concessions stand (called the “Taste of the Majors”) which spotlights items from other MLB cities when opponents roll into town
 - 1. Items include a Chicago Dog, a St. Louis BBQ platter and a San Diego Fish Taco Platter (click [here](#) for a complete listing)
 - (iii) At the Super Bowl in 2018, US Bank Stadium in Minneapolis combined local flavors (like roast turkey legs and cheese curds) with fare featuring themes from the two cities playing in the game
 - 1. For the Eagles, the stadium offered a South Philly roast pork sandwich and for the Patriots, they added a New England clam roll to the menu
 - (iv) MLB’s “London Series” in 2019 between the Yankees and Red sox featured some of the league’s more [notable](#) dishes while offering some items that paid tribute to England’s culinary scene:
 - 1. The Boomstick – A 2-foot-long hot dog covered in braised beef American chili, jalapeno cheese sauce, tomato & chili relish, spring onions, jalapenos
 - 2. Prime Burger - 100% British beef burger, brioche roll, jalapeno cheese sauce, crispy bacon
 - 3. Dirty Beets Burger (Vegetarian) - Spinach & kale burger, beetroot bap, baby gem lettuce, beef tomato, jalapeno cheese sauce

4. Fat Rooster Chicken Burger - Crispy chicken fillet, brioche roll, gherkin (pickle) slaw, piri-piri mayo
- (b) Every year, the concessions items get a little crazier
- (i) Among the new items appearing on stadium menus in the last two seasons:
 1. Generating more buzz than any perhaps other concessions item at MLB ballparks in recent memory was the Seattle Mariners' introduction of toasted grasshoppers (dusted with a chili-lime seasoning) at Safeco Field
 - a. They sold more than 18,000 orders during the *first series* of the season last year
 - b. Click [here](#) for a visually stunning look at the popular Seattle snack from ESPN
 2. MiLB's Erie Seawolves [hosted](#) a theme night called "Sugar Rush Night", putting a cotton candy hot dog on the menu (a hot dog, wrapped in a cotton candy bun, and sprinkled with nerds candy on top)
 3. Prior to the COVID-19 shutdown, MLB stadiums were set to offer plenty of crazy options in 2020, including such "culinary delights" as the Detroit Tigers' "Chicken Churro Sandwich" (chicken tender topped with Michigan maple syrup on a churro bun), the Texas Rangers' "Rattler" (rattlesnake sausage drizzled with "venom sauce") and the Milwaukee Brewers' "Greek Fry" (fries topped with gyro meat, tzatziki sauce, feta crumbles and diced tomatoes)
 - a. Click [here](#) for CBS Sports' rundown of the best MLB stadium foods in 2019
 - b. Click [here](#) for some of the crazy concessions items the Texas Rangers will offer when they open their new stadium
 - (c) The Arizona Cardinals turned a concessions item into a promotional opportunity
 - (i) The "Gridiron Burger" consists of five 1/3-pound hamburger patties, eight slices of bacon, eight chicken tenders, five all-beef hot dogs and five bratwursts, twenty slices of American cheese, twelve ounces of fries, shredded lettuce, tomatoes, pickles and sauce and cost \$75
 - (ii) According to [ESPN](#), anyone who finished the seven-pound "burger" in under an hour would win a jersey and his or her photo on the video board inside the stadium

*** INSTRUCTOR'S NOTE ***



So how exactly do these teams determine which concessions items to offer? Where do they find the inspiration for creative ways to present specialty items (like nachos served in a batting

helmet)? USA Today's "For the Win" provided a great behind-the-scenes look at how the Chicago White Sox catering staff prepares their menu for a new season.

In addition to provide a fun story to share in class, the article discusses the role fan feedback plays in their decision-making. This provides a great way to reinforce some of the lessons already covered in class and is one of the most important principles helping drive the business of sports and entertainment.

* As a reminder, please read/review the article before sharing with students to determine whether it is appropriate for your classroom. Click [here](#) to read the story.

- (d) Offering quirky concessions offerings help sports teams at all levels generate publicity for the franchise
 - (i) McCormick Field in North Carolina (home of the [Asheville Tourists](#)) offered a concessions item featuring fried chicken and french fries in a waffle cone, smothered with a choice of maple syrup or nacho cheese
 - (ii) As part of their "Halfway to Halloween" promotion, the Fresno Grizzlies served up the "[Frankenslice](#)", a pizza with full hot dogs baked into the crust
 - (iii) Minor League Baseball held a "[#FoodFight](#)" competition online and on Twitter, allowing fans to vote for their favorite ballpark concessions items
 - 1. The winner was Round Rock Express' "Lava Rock Fire and Ice", a beef tenderloin and shrimp dish cooked on actual lava rock, which edged out the New Hampshire Fisher Cats' "Squealer" sandwich
 - a. Click [here](#) to see a complete list of the contest entries
 - (iv) Last season, the Wisconsin Timber Rattlers held a "Food Fight" competition of their own (the 4th annual), asking fans to weigh in on several new recipes (submitted by fans) to determine what new food item would permanently appear on the stadium menu
 - 1. The fans [voted](#) the "Almighty Pork Sandwich" (a grilled brat cut in half, topped with BBQ pulled pork, melted Swiss cheese, peppered bacon, red pepper jelly, and fried pickles served on an onion roll) as the best new item, beating out a Mushroom & Swiss Steak Sandwich, BBQ Pulled Pork Chippers, Grilled Mac & Cheese Sandwich, and Grilled BBQ Mac & Cheese
 - a. The promotion generated a lot of publicity for the Timber Rattlers with the big reveal announced on [Facebook Live](#) with a food and drink reporter for the USA Today Network
- (e) Broadway shows have caught on to the concession crave – Sweet Hospitality Group works with theatres to offer patrons unique food and drink depending on the show
 - (i) Click [here](#) to read how Sweet Hospitality Group has re-invented theatre's concessions sales strategy from inc.com
- (f) Click [here](#) for an interesting infographic examining the economy of food at sporting events



*** ACTIVITY IDEA ***

Challenge students to come up with their own concessions menu that they would serve at a sports or entertainment event. How much will they charge for the items? Will they have any outlandish concessions items like the food mentioned above? What will it be called?

3. Traditions (seventh inning stretch, throwing out the first pitch etc.)
 - a. Detroit Red Wings “octopus toss”
 - b. Hockey “hat tricks”
 - c. Kissing the bricks at the Brickyard 400
 - d. “Lambeau Leap” at Green Bay Packer games
 - i. In 2014, the team unveiled a [statue](#) at Lambeau Field, commemorating the tradition
 - e. Chants at soccer matches
 - i. Click [here](#) for a brief video highlighting some of the chants performed at Portland Timbers’ games by their loyal group of supporters, the Timbers Army
 - f. Wearing outrageous hats at the Kentucky Derby
 - i. Click [here](#) for a slide show
 - g. The first pitch at baseball games
 - i. PGA Tour stars Jordan Speith and Zach Johnson threw out the first pitches for the Texas Rangers and Chicago Cubs, respectively, in 2015 and made a \$5,000 [wager](#) on who would throw the best pitch (with the money going to charity). ESPN’s SportsCenter was responsible for crowning the champion (Speith).
 - ii. Actors Will Ferrell and Zach Galifianakis ate deep dish pizza on the mound after throwing out the first pitch at a Cubs game (in a great example of cross promotion as they were promoting the film “The Campaign”) while they also read starting lineups for each team and included some “little-known facts” about the players
 - iii. Click [here](#) to see an infographic from *Washington Post* analyzing the best and worst first pitches from celebrities over the years
 - (a) In 2020, the Washington Nationals brought Dr. Anthony Fauci to the ballpark to throw the first pitch to celebrate the start of the new Major League Baseball season in one of the first MLB games without fans
 - (i) Click [here](#) to see the pitch from Yahoo! Sports twitter account
 - h. “Jump Around” tradition between the third and fourth quarter at Camp Randall Stadium, home of the Wisconsin Badgers football team
 - i. USA Today’s “For the Win” ranked the “weirdest” traditions in sports, including the University of New Hampshire hockey tradition of throwing fish onto the ice after the team scores its first goal
 - i. Click [here](#) to see the list

*** INSTRUCTOR'S NOTE ***



The concept of “traditions” provides a great opportunity for class discussion. To enhance the discussion in class, consider passing out the “traditions” student handout (a past SCC blog post) in the folder marked “Lesson 10.1”. After reviewing the handout, distribute the “traditions” assignment.

*** DISCUSSION IDEA / TRIVIA ***



Ask students how many of the aforementioned traditions they have heard of before? Can they think of any that are not mentioned? Are there any local traditions with high schools or colleges? Do you think you could start a tradition? Why or why not?

Lesson 10.3

Role of Game Operations in Sports Marketing

- A. Game operations is an integral activity within the framework of a successful sports marketing organization as it can effectively assist the business in many areas
1. Ticket sales & attendance
 - a. Keeps fans entertained throughout the event, increasing the likelihood that they will return for another game
 - i. As technology continues to evolve and the at-home viewing experience improve, sports teams feel more pressure to create an experience that trumps the experience of enjoying a game from the comfort of a fan's own home
 - (a) According to the [San Francisco Gate](#), the 49ers built Levi's Stadium with the game day experience in mind, understanding that they have to compete for the attention of fans who could watch from the comfort of their homes, with kitchens, bathrooms and laptops within easy reach
 - b. Provides game "attractiveness" which is a factor that directly influences game attendance
 - i. The level of consumer perceived values increases when the game or event features additional entertainment and promotion ²³
 - c. Game operations include numerous connections to ticket sales promotions within the event. For example, a team may host a "Hawaiian Night", offering \$5 off tickets to any fans wearing tropical shirts to the game. Game operations may choose to implement:
 - i. An all staff memo or email, encouraging them to dress in tropical attire if they plan to attend the game
 - ii. National anthem performed by a Hawaiian musician or steel drum band
 - iii. Hawaiian lei give-away to the first 500 fans through the gate
 - iv. A limbo contest at a quarter break
 - v. Hawaiian music or bands on the venue concourse
 - vi. A hammock free throw shooting contest at half time
 - vii. Hawaiian themed food at concessions stands



Divide your class into groups or pairs. Have each group come up with a game or event promotion idea, then develop strategies for integrating ticket sales, sponsorship, publicity and in-game entertainment in conjunction with the promotion. Have them create some visual aids to support their promotion and present their ideas in class.

2. Sponsorship
 - a. Adds value to sponsorship packages
 - b. Creates new inventory available to sell
 - c. Assists in the fulfillment aspect of a client sponsorship package

- i. For example, a team may sell a sponsorship for their “Hawaiian Night”. As part of the sponsorship package, game operations may be responsible for fulfilling several elements which could include:
 - (a) PA announcements throughout the game announcing “Hawaiian Night”, sponsored by ABC Travel
 - (b) A trip to Hawaii giveaway, presented by ABC Travel
 - (c) Special on court promotions
 - (d) Signage
- 3. Publicity
 - a. A successful event will also help generate community “buzz” surrounding the team
 - i. In addition to talking about the outcome of the game, fans may discuss the entertaining half-time act and the free coupon for a burger they won when the team scored 100 points
 - b. Publicity can be used to help promote future events
 - i. The Vancouver Whitecaps (MLS) enjoyed tremendous success with a “dime dog night” event, and later tweeted “10,866 hot dogs consumed tonight for dime dog night! Next one is July 31. #wcaps” to promote a future game
 - c. Special game entertainment promotions are communicated to fans through a variety of channels
 - i. Minor League Baseball’s Charlotte StoneCrabs scheduled an appearance from Santa Claus to visit the ballpark and entertain fans for their “Christmas in August” promotion. The special appearance was communicated via press releases, the team’s advertising and through their social media channels.²⁴
 - d. Communications professionals are typically responsible for creating a connection between the team and the media, including the facilitation of access to players and coaches for interviews and providing game notes (statistics, information regarding the opponent etc.) for the media
- 4. Customer Service
 - a. Game operations affords organizations an excellent opportunity to effectively serve customers
 - b. Examples
 - i. Recognizing long-time season ticket holders on the Jumbotron

*** INSTRUCTOR’S NOTE ***



The use of the word “jumbotron” provides an excellent branding example...Jumbotrons are actually manufactured by Sony, although the term is synonymous among sports fans as a scoreboard type apparatus within stadiums and other facilities.

- ii. Birthday greetings to season ticket holders over the PA
 - iii. Special congratulatory announcements on the scoreboard
- c. Ultimately, customer service is about retention and keeping fans coming back for more

- i. To achieve a high level of retention, game operations and entertainment staff must understand fan tastes and distastes, game situations and the atmosphere of the event as whole in an effort to help fans to enjoy the game or event experience in its entirety
 - (a) The Pittsburgh Pirates' producer and director of in-game entertainment explains the music selection being played during at games at PNC Park: *"We always try to have one or two very contemporary songs -- something on the iTunes most-downloaded list, something in the Top 10. Then, one or two good rock songs from the '80s or '90s. One or two classic rock songs -- this is Pittsburgh; everyone loves the classic rock -- and one or two oldies. We try to cover all the bases -- no pun intended."*²⁵

Unit 10 Key Terms Defined:

Game Attractiveness: Game attractiveness refers to the customer's perception of the event as a whole

Game Operations: The planning, organization and execution of game production, presentation, entertainment and promotion

Unit 10 References & Resources:

- 1) http://www.bizjournals.com/atlanta/news/2016/08/03/braves-reveal-delayed-game-times-to-ease-traffic.html?ana=RSS%26s=article_search
- 2) http://www.usatoday.com/sports/motor/nascar/2011-07-11-kentucky-speedway-traffic_n.htm
- 3) www.myajc.com/news/local/commuters...braves.../TOWgWCPeR1YYrTpTKlcBN/
- 4) <http://www.sportsbusinessdaily.com/Journal/Issues/2010/10/20101011/SBJ-In-Depth/Park-It.aspx>
- 5) <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/23/nyregion/barclays-center-traffic-plan-cuts-parking-spots.html>
- 6) <http://cqresearcherblog.blogspot.com/2010/01/should-nfl-do-more-to-control-crowd.html>
- 7) <http://sports.espn.go.com/espn/otl/news/story?id=460317>
- 8) <http://www.nascar.com/2010/news/business/07/20/lvms.smartphone.app/index.html>
- 9) <http://www.baylorbears.com/sports/m-footbl/spec-rel/081814aab.html>
- 10) <http://www.marketwatch.com/story/american-express-to-enhance-fan-experience-with-interactive-technology-at-the-2010-us-open-at-pebble-beach-2010-06-08>
- 11) <http://www.sportsbusinessdaily.com/Journal/Issues/2011/06/20/Marketing-and-Sponsorship/RBS-USGA.aspx?hl=course%20curator&sc=0>
- 12) http://weareaustin.com/fulltext?nxd_id=78195
- 13) http://sports-forum.com/news/?article_id=569
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- 17) http://www.boston.com/sports/hockey/b Bruins/articles/2011/06/05/garden_fans_on_the_money
- 18) <https://www.sportsbusinessdaily.com/Journal/Issues/2019/07/08/In-Depth/Delaware-North.aspx>
- 19) <http://content.usatoday.com/communities/gameon/post/2011/08/49ers-giants-raiders-tell-us-has-stadium-violence-made-you-more-wary-about-going-to-a-game/1>
- 20) <http://cqresearcherblog.blogspot.com/2010/01/should-nfl-do-more-to-control-crowd.html>
- 21) http://www.boston.com/sports/baseball/redsox/articles/2004/07/27/now_ithat146si_entertainment
- 22) *Sports Marketing: A Strategic Perspective*, M. Shank, p. 178
- 23) <http://www.sportsbusinessdaily.com/Journal/Issues/2013/07/22/Franchises/Mascots.aspx>
- 24) <https://www.facebook.com/charlottestonecrabs>
- 25) http://www.pittsburghlive.com/x/pittsburghtrib/ae/s_613676.html

