

# Sports & Entertainment Marketing

## Unit Nine Outline, 2020-21 School Year

### Unit 9: Ticket Promotion & Sales

#### OVERVIEW

*Unit nine begins to explore the roots of sports and entertainment business by providing students with an understanding of the ticketing process. Ticketing, as a function of sports and entertainment marketing, has evolved into a complex process and proves to be one of the most important components of the SEM marketing mix. This unit will cover the way tickets are sold and marketed, and the importance this revenue stream has on an organization's financial viability.*

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#### OBJECTIVES

- 1) Understand the importance of ticket sales to the sports and entertainment industry
  - 2) Identify factors that influence a fan's decision to purchase tickets
  - 3) List at least five ticket sales strategies
  - 4) Define ticket package
  - 5) Explain the concept of frequency escalator
  - 6) Describe how ticketing technology has provided innovative alternatives for customers
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#### LESSONS

- Lesson 9.1** Role of Ticket Sales in Sports & Entertainment Business  
**Lesson 9.2** Ticket Sales Strategies  
**Lesson 9.3** The Ticket Sales Cycle  
**Lesson 9.4** Ticketing Technologies
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#### KEY TERMS

**Data Mining**  
**Season Tickets**

**Frequency Escalator**  
**Season Ticket Equivalents**

**Group Tickets**  
**Ticket Package**

## Lesson 9.1

### Role of Ticket Sales in Sports and Entertainment Business

- A. How important is the ticket sales function to the sports and entertainment industry?
  - 1. A fan's participation in a game or event can be as important as the athletes and performers as they create an exciting atmosphere that energizes the performers and enhances the consumer experience
  - 2. Ticket sales have traditionally served as the financial backbone for almost every sports team within the industry
    - a. According to an article published in the *Sports Business Journal*, "ticket sales are the lifeblood of most franchises."
      - i. Sales from tickets and club seats can account for more than half of a typical franchise's local revenue in all four major sports leagues, ranging as high as 80 percent for some teams <sup>1</sup>
      - ii. Even a modest attendance increase can have a significant impact on a team's bottom line
        - (a) Two years ago, the Atlanta Braves reported a 2% increase in attendance at Sun Trust Park, helping the franchise's revenue to jump from \$4.3 million per game to \$4.6 million per game
        - (i) The team's owner told the [\*Atlanta Journal Constitution\*](#) the revenue boost was the result of increased ticket sales and higher attendance (which helps boost revenue in other ways like concessions, parking and merchandise sales)
      - iii. In a nod to the importance of pricing as a function of marketing, Major League Baseball's revenue in 2019 was expected to increase by \$19 million compared to the 2018 season, thanks to a 2.1% increase in average ticket price (according to a front office sports [story](#))
  - 3. While ticket revenue still provides the primary revenue source for a many sports teams, media rights deals now provide the biggest revenue stream for teams in major leagues like the NFL and NBA
    - a. According to PWC's annual sports outlook [report](#), in 2018, media rights officially overtook gate revenues (ticket sales) as the industry's largest revenue generator for the first time in industry history
    - b. According to Forbes, the U.S. Open generated \$130 million ticket sales revenue and \$120 million in broadcast revenue in 2018, evidence the gap between ticket revenue and broadcast revenue for major sporting events is closing
  - 4. That said, for many teams, leagues, ticket sales still remain the most important revenue stream and are critical to the success of any organization
- B. Ticket sales affect other functions of the sports and entertainment business
  - 1. Sponsorships increase in value with the increase in ticket sales
    - a. For example, sold out games and events maximize exposure for a sponsoring company, thus enhancing the value of their sponsorship investment
    - b. COVID-19 has led sponsors to wonder whether they will get the return-on-investment (ROI) they had anticipated with a sponsorship if no fans are in attendance
- C. Ticket sales are affected by other functions of the sports and entertainment business
  - 1. Ticket sales decline with the presence of negative publicity
    - a. For example, communities are less likely to support athletes and entertainers who have developed a negative image or have a poor public persona
      - i. The Portland Trail Blazers battled team image problems in the early 2000's and earned the nickname "Jail Blazers" - the team went from selling out every game to last in the NBA in attendance in 2006

- (a) Click [here](#) for an graphic highlighting the Blazers' attendance figures and the impact of the "Jail Blazers" negative publicity
- D. Many factors influencing ticket sales and attendance
  - 1. Team performance
    - a. Winning teams traditionally draw bigger crowds while losing teams typically see attendance decline
      - i. After selling out 530 consecutive games, spanning 6 ½ seasons, the San Francisco Giants sellout streak came to an end in 2017
        - (a) It was the second longest sellout streak in Major League Baseball history
        - (b) Not coincidentally, the team was in last place when the streak ended, after being consistently one of the best teams in baseball the last seven years (including three World Series wins)
        - (c) As the team continued to struggle on the field, the Giants saw attendance figures decline, posting a record low at the start of the 2019 season when the team [announced](#) an attendance of 28,625 at a home game in April – the first time the team recorded less than 30,000 tickets in nearly ten years
      - ii. Thanks to a successful season that ended with a Sweet 16 appearance in the 2018 NCAA Tournament, the Nevada University men's basketball team surpassed 8,000 season tickets for the first time in a decade (an increase of more than 2,000 season tickets from the previous season) <sup>2</sup>
      - iii. As the San Diego Padres struggled through their eighth consecutive losing season in 2018, the team introduced a rather unorthodox ticket sales package in which the number of games fans would be able to attend was contingent upon how many games the team won <sup>3</sup>
        - (a) Click [here](#) to learn more about the Padres' "Five Win Pass" promotion
  - 2. Fan loyalty and fan support
    - a. Some markets traditionally attract more fan support and larger crowds by nature
      - i. New England with the Red Sox, Bruins, Celtics and Patriots
      - ii. Hockey in Canadian markets
      - iii. High school basketball in Indiana
      - iv. High school football in Texas
      - v. College football in the south (Texas, Alabama, Georgia, Florida)
      - vi. Soccer in the Pacific Northwest
        - (a) Last season, the National Women's Soccer League's Portland Thorns averaged over 20,000 fans per home game (that's more fans per game than all but 3 NHL teams, 2 NBA teams, 4 MLS teams and 6 MLB teams)
    - b. Meanwhile other markets have a reputation for poor fan support
      - i. Because so many residents are transplants (not born and raised in the state), professional sports teams in the state of Florida have a difficult time attracting crowds
        - (a) According to a Facebook survey, the most popular MLB teams in Florida are the Atlanta Braves and New York Yankees, not the Miami Marlins or Tampa Bay Rays <sup>4</sup>
        - (b) Out of the nine professional Florida teams that compete in the big four leagues (NBA, NFL, MLB, NHL), all but two rank in the bottom half of their league for attendance over the last decade
          - (i) Last year, the Tampa Bay Buccaneers ranked 30<sup>th</sup> out of 32 teams in the NFL, the Miami Marlins were 30<sup>th</sup> out of 30 and Tampa Bay Rays 29<sup>th</sup> in MLB, and the Florida Panthers were 30<sup>th</sup> out of 30 NHL teams
  - c. Rivalry games
    - i. Rivalry games are often an instant recipe for boosting attendance

- ii. According to a [study](#) by comebackcity.us, MLB regional rivalry games (Washington Nationals vs. Baltimore Orioles, LA Dodgers vs. LA Angels etc.) performed 18 to 25 percent better than non-regional games
    - iii. The intensity of fan support varies from rivalry to rivalry and market to market
      - (a) Click [here](#) to see USA Today's ranking of the best NFL rivalries
      - (b) Click [here](#) to see Bleacher Report's ranking of the 100 best rivalries in the history of sports
    - iv. MiLB's Pawtucket Red Sox created a promotion to capitalize on the intense Red Sox / Yankees rivalry when they hosted "[Evil Empire Night](#)"
    - v. Tickets to see the University of North Carolina Tarheels play the Duke Blue Devils are nearly impossible to get, but tickets for that rivalry series were sent into the stratosphere with the arrival of Zion Williamson in 2019
      - (a) The cheapest ticket price at Cameron Indoor Stadium (home of the Blue Devils) on the secondary market started at nearly \$3,200, and Zion would only end up playing 36 seconds before blowing out his shoe and leaving with an injury
    - vi. When the annual rivalry game between SUNY Cortland and Ithaca College was moved closer to New York City last year (played at MetLife Stadium rather than either of the school campuses), the event set an attendance record for a Division III football game, drawing over 45,000 fans (according to the [NY Times](#))
    - vii. Click [here](#) for a mini-documentary on the Major League Soccer website showcasing the rivalry between the Montreal Impact and Toronto FC
  - d. The law of supply and demand also applies to ticket sales
    - i. "Sellouts breed sellouts"
      - (a) For example, some sports teams have long waiting lists for season tickets
        - (i) Major League Soccer's Portland Timbers have a [wait list](#) for season tickets at Providence Park of more than 13,000 fans
        - (ii) The waiting list at Lambeau Field is notoriously long, with Packer fans [reportedly](#) having to wait more than 30 years for the chance to buy season tickets (there are nearly 135,000 names on the waiting list and the population of the entire city of Green Bay is 105,000)
    - ii. Supply and demand also influences ticket prices
      - (a) In 2019, tennis icons Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal squared off at Wimbledon, setting the stage for perhaps one of the last opportunities for fans to see the two legends compete against one another
        - (i) According to a Yahoo! Sports report, tickets on the secondary market for the match started at \$9,000, more than double the price of the lowest tickets to the 2019 Super Bowl and 1,700% higher than the cost of the cheapest tickets to Game 6 of the 2019 NBA Finals in Oakland
3. Highly visible athletes and entertainers
- i. David Beckham played his last Major League Soccer game in 2012, but his impact on the league was significant
    - (a) Since Beckham entered the MLS, the league has expanded from 12 to 22 teams and attendance for nearly every team has increased by 5,000 fans per game – attendance at MLS matches now often exceeds that in the NBA and NHL <sup>5</sup>
  - ii. When it was announced that LeBron James would be joining the Los Angeles Lakers, the lowest price of a Lakers season ticket for Staples Center games jumped to \$5,750 from \$3,499 on StubHub.com, while the high end reached nearly \$100,000 <sup>6</sup>

- iii. When former Heisman Trophy winner and NFL quarterback Tim Tebow switched sports to play baseball, Minor League Baseball fans came out in droves to see him<sup>7</sup>
  - (a) While playing for the Columbia Fireflies, team attendance increased to 5,154 per game, up from 3,785 the previous season
    - (i) When the Fireflies played on the road, opposing teams experienced attendance increases of roughly 78%
    - (ii) Some executives estimated that Tebow's presence helped teams generate \$50,000 in additional ticket, concession and merchandise revenue each game
- iv. After Dale Earnhardt Jr. won the 2014 Daytona 500, ISC quickly saw a double-digit bump in sales at many of their tracks immediately after the victory (ISC owns 12 tracks — Daytona, Talladega, Auto Club (California), Chicagoland, Darlington, Homestead-Miami, Kansas, Martinsville, Michigan, Phoenix, Richmond and Watkins Glen)
- v. The NBA faces a lot of criticism when teams rest star players for nationally televised games
  - (a) Those decisions anger fans who buy tickets with the expectation of seeing players like Steph Curry, Kevin Durant, LeBron James and James Harden
  - (b) NBA commissioner Adam Silver sent a personal memo to team owners stressing protocol about player availability and how important it was to maintain the quality of gameplay for the league
  - (c) In the 2017 NBA offseason, the league decided to stretch the regular season schedule by 10 days, allowing more days between games to curb the practice of resting players fans are paying to see play
  - (d) Click [here](#) for an interesting report that analyzed which NBA stars have the biggest impact on attendance
    - (i) Click [here](#) for a graphic that illustrates LeBron James' influence on attendance over the years
    - (ii) Click [here](#) for a graphic illustrating which players in league history had the biggest influence on attendance
- vi. Season ticket sales soared after the New Orleans Pelicans won the lottery and selected Zion Williamson with the first pick in the 2019 NBA Draft
  - (a) The franchise, which typically averages around 16,000 fans per game, sold 10,000 season tickets in the week after the draft and were [projected](#) to sell a total of around 14,000, putting them in position to sell out many games during the 2019-20 season
- vii. After signing free agent Kawhi Leonard and trading for another hometown basketball star in Paul George, demand for Los Angeles Clippers season tickets predictably surged
  - (a) According to one [report](#), the team sent an email to fans before they officially signed Kawhi or traded for George with the subject line: "Secure Your 2019-20 Season Tickets Now."
  - (b) Less than 24 hours later, the link in the email took recipients to the following message: "There are currently no tickets available. Continue to check back as additional tickets may become available for purchase at a later time."
- viii. Last year, the Philadelphia Phillies signed one of the biggest names in baseball to a free agent contract worth \$300 million. According to a mlb.com [report](#), the team sold 180,000 tickets in the next two days following the team's announced signing of the former Nationals' star while ticket prices increased by 93% on the secondary market, according to [StubHub](#)

- ix. When Tom Brady left New England to sign with Tampa Bay as a free agent in 2020, Buccaneers' ticket prices skyrocketed, increasing by 135% on the secondary market while Patriots tickets dropped by 39%, according to [data](#) from TicketIQ
- 4. Facilities, venues and stadiums
  - a. Very few stadiums remain with rich traditions and history, but the lore of each adds to the appeal for fans to attend games
    - i. Storied facilities with tradition also have a unique appeal that draws tourists
    - ii. Examples
      - (a) Fenway Park (Boston Red Sox)
      - (b) Wrigley Field (Chicago Cubs)
      - (c) Lambeau Field (Green Bay Packers)
      - (d) Madison Square Garden (New York Knicks, New York Rangers New York Liberty, St. John's University etc.)
      - (e) Wimbledon
  - b. New and/or updated stadiums have become the trend as a way to attract new fans and create opportunities to maximize revenues
    - i. When Colorado State University [opened](#) a new \$220 million football stadium, the program set sales of a record 14,000 season tickets
      - (a) Click [here](#) for a story suggesting CSU's Canvas Stadium actually managed to outperform revenue expectations in its first year
    - ii. In 2020, the University of Utah [provided](#) a "virtual" flyover to provide a glimpse of the football stadium renovation project, which included the [relocation](#) of the iconic Olympic cauldron from the 2002 Winter Games hosted in Salt Lake City to make room for 5,000 additional available seats, including premium seating options
    - iii. New stadiums and venues rely on improved amenities to excite consumers
      - (a) The \$1.3 billion Yankee Stadium has an in-house museum, party suites, a members-only restaurant and many other luxury amenities. *"We tried to reflect a five-star hotel and put a ballfield in the middle,"* said Yankees COO Lonny Trost.<sup>10</sup>
      - (b) Several newer stadiums (such as the Dallas [Cowboys](#), San Francisco [49ers](#) and [Miami Marlins](#)) include art galleries to help the venue appeal to a broader base of consumer
      - (c) The Atlanta Braves announced plans in 2016 to update their home stadium to include one unique amenity in particular – a Zip Line <sup>11</sup>
      - (d) As a fan-friendly element of the Minnesota Twins ballpark, the stadium features three-sided shelters where fans can go to warm up on chilly game days <sup>12</sup>
      - (e) Standing more than 110 feet tall, Charlotte Motor Speedway's 16,000 square foot HDTV (80-feet tall by 200-feet wide) features instant replays and live lap by lap action on its more than 650,000 pound videoboard during races (the board, for those keeping score, is 30 percent larger than the screen at Cowboys Stadium, which previously held the title of world's largest television screen)<sup>13</sup>
        - (i) Click [here](#) for an infographic comparing the size of each NFL team's scoreboard
        - (ii) When the new NFL stadium in Los Angeles opens in 2020, it will feature an oval shaped, dual-sided Oculus video board with over 60,000 feet of digital display -- so there literally won't be a bad seat in the house
      - (f) Many stadiums now feature retractable roofs to ensure the fan experience will not be hampered by inclement weather



- (i) For example, the Minnesota Vikings' [stadium](#) features a translucent roof and moveable windows
- (g) In 2018, the Jacksonville Jaguars [announced](#) plans to open a dog park at EverBank Field
  - (i) The first of its kind among NFL stadiums, the dog park will welcome approximately 250 dogs throughout the 2018 season
- (h) The Miami Marlins' stadium features a left-field beach with a swimming pool (fans buying seats in this area will have a view into the home bullpen), a bobble-head "museum", a right-field porch where fans can catch home-run balls and sliding glass panels behind left field to showcase Miami's skyline
  - (i) According to MLB.com, Marlins attendance was up a stunning 67 percent from the previous year at the 2012 Major League Baseball all-star break
  - (ii) By 2014, between a drop in the team's on-field productivity and the allure of a new stadium wearing off, Marlins attendance dropped so substantially that they ranked among the lowest in the league
    - 1. Click [here](#) to read a story from Sports Illustrated chronicling some of the factors influencing the Marlins' attendance problems
- iv. Renderings released in 2018 for a proposed Major League Soccer stadium in Austin [reveal](#) plans for an on-site music performance space, parking garage, bicycle valet, up to 130 affordable housing units, walkways and trails around the soccer facility, and a possible station for light rail
- v. When the Los Angeles Dodgers complete their \$100 million renovation project in 2020, elevators and escalators will be built in the right and left side of the stadium with bridges to connect new standing-room decks to the rest of the stadium, allowing fans to walk the entire ballpark's perimeter from any level inside Dodger Stadium
- vi. The excitement for the newly relocated team and new stadium in Las Vegas pushed Raiders tickets to the top of the list of most expensive tickets on the secondary market prior to the 2020 season, [averaging](#) a stunning \$1,098 per seat
  - (a) However, the Raiders franchise made the decision to play the 2020 season without fans amid the pandemic, forcing fans to wait another year before seeing the team play live at Allegiant Stadium
  - (b) According to one [estimate](#), the decision to forego ticket revenue in the team's inaugural season at its new \$2 billion stadium would cost the franchise \$571 million in ticket and game-day revenue, more than any other NFL team
- vii. According to John Oliver in a rant on his popular "Last Week Tonight with John Oliver" show on HBO, nearly 90% of U.S. stadiums have been replaced or received major construction upgrades in the last 20 years <sup>14</sup>
  - (a) According to the [Sports Business Journal](#), nearly \$17 billion has been spent either building or renovating MLB ballparks – 296 projects in all – in the last 25 years, including a new stadium for the Texas Rangers opening in 2019
    - (i) Click [here](#) for a graphic illustrating the amount of money invested in stadium projects since 1994 (when Rangers Stadium was built)

**\* INSTRUCTOR'S NOTE \***



*Now might be a good time to introduce the “stadium design” project located in the lesson 9.1 folder. Be sure to emphasize the importance of ticket sales when assigning the project and encourage your students to be creative with their designs. Consider requiring them to include one unique stadium amenity with their design concepts. Alternatively, distribute this project in lesson 10.1 after discussing fan experience and technology. You may also want to utilize the project to help differentiate between the fields of sport management and sport marketing.*

5. Promotion and sales

a. Promotional efforts help drive sales

- i. In 1952, the legendary Bill Veeck introduced “Bat Day” with the Cleveland Indians, a promotions tradition carried on today by many minor league baseball clubs, including the Indianapolis Indians <sup>15</sup>
- ii. Most sports and entertainment organizations offer special ticket promotions and customized “packages”
  - (a) Last season, the Detroit Tigers offered several “Special” ticket packages that fans could choose from, such as the “Outdoorsman” ticket package and “Golf lovers” package as well as special incentives to purchase tickets for “themed” promotions like Yoga Day at Comerica Park <sup>16</sup>
    - (i) The Tigers’ special packages included exclusive premium items (like a Tigers branded fishing lure for the “Outdoorsman” package or a yoga mat for Yoga Day) in addition to game tickets
    - (ii) Many of the team’s packages included a charity component and/or offered a pre-game party or “experience”
  - (b) Concert promoters now offering VIP packages, offering fans opportunities to access the best seats for the show and often times exclusive access to the artist for a premium price. Packages might include a back-stage tour and pre-show dinners.
    - (i) Through the sale of premium packages, concert promoters and artists can make as much on 10% of their audience as they do on the other 90%. While an average concert ticket may cost \$90, the VIP ticket can go for \$1750. Broadway shows have also enjoyed a lot of success through the implementation of premium VIP packaging.<sup>17</sup>

b. Most organizations employ a full-time staff to manage promotions and sales

- i. LSU’s athletics staff features an entire department devoted to promotions, including a director, two assistant directors and two coordinators <sup>18</sup>
- ii. The NBA’s Miami Heat employs a staff of 7-10 to focus *specifically* on group ticket sales <sup>19</sup>

c. The frequency of special promotions and size of sales staffs are dependent upon a team’s available ticket inventory



- i. The Green Bay Packers, whose home games have been sold out on a season ticket basis since 1960, do not have any ticket sales personnel on staff and, subsequently, do not typically host any ticket driven promotions at games <sup>20</sup>
    - ii. By contrast, the NHL's Carolina Hurricanes beefed up their sales staff from 8 to 32 in 2016 to help battle declining attendance
      - (a) The increased staffing resulted in a 40% boost in season ticket sales, 60% increase in ticket revenue and an 18% jump in season ticket renewals <sup>21</sup>
    - iii. After the 2010 announcement of the signing of free agents LeBron James, Chris Bosh and Dwyane Wade, the Miami Heat quickly sold out of ticket inventory. Soon after, the team infamously let go a reported 30 ticket sales staff members. Explained team spokesperson Lorrie-Ann Diaz, "Now that the supply for (season tickets) has been exhausted we no longer require a season ticket sales team." <sup>22</sup>
  - d. Successful promotion and sales strategies are dependent upon an organization's willingness to conscientiously invest company resources in market research
    - i. It is important to understand the behavior of ticket buyers
      - (a) How do fans feel about the ease of buying tickets?
      - (b) What motivates fans to buy tickets?
      - (c) What factors impact a fan's decision to attend a particular game?
    - ii. It is important for an organization to utilize market research data
      - (a) Does the organization review fan demographic information when creating ticket marketing strategies?
    - iii. Market research is important in the creation of an effective ticket advertising strategy
      - (a) Which newspapers and sections are fans most likely to read?
      - (b) Which radio stations best fit fan demographics?
      - (c) Which television stations are fan favorites?
    - iv. In the past, the Cleveland Indians have analyzed ticket sales data and discovered several [interesting statistics](#) regarding factors that influenced attendance at home games
      - (a) Fireworks after a game draw an additional 4,000 fans
      - (b) Every one-degree temperature drop below 70 Fahrenheit costs 300 seats
      - (c) When the New York Yankees come to town, attendance jumps 11,000
6. Ticketing Trends
- a. Like any other industry, business trends play an important role in how sports and entertainment properties market their products and services
    - i. With high demand for premium seating, many teams look for ways to maximize space within the venue by creating new premium seating areas to accommodate demand
      - (a) The New England Patriots and Pittsburgh Steelers transformed the end-zone sections of their respective stadiums into club seating areas (the Minnesota Vikings' new stadium also offers ground level club seating options)<sup>23</sup>
        - (i) The Patriots' club-style seating area provides "members-only" access and carries a hefty \$1,500 annual fee (minimum purchase of two memberships). Those fees are in addition to the cost of season tickets every year. <sup>24</sup>
          - 1. Click [here](#) to read more from sportingnews.com.
      - (b) As part of the Baltimore Ravens' \$120 million renovation project in 2019, new luxury suites and party areas were built into each open notch of the stadium to increase the team's premium seating inventory
      - (c) In 2020, [Sports Business Journal](#) published a story discussing the booming trend of building or renovating college baseball and softball stadiums

- (i) According to the report, overall ballpark construction costs were estimated to exceed more than \$233 million in 2020 alone, highlighted by Florida's new 10,000-seat baseball venue in Gainesville, a \$65 million project that is scheduled to open in 2021
  - (ii) Florida AD Scott Stricklin told [SBJ](#) that the expectation is ticket revenue will triple once the Gators are in the new ballpark, with sales bolstered by offering fans four different types of premium seating options
- ii. Another common trend in ticketing is the inclusion of food related promotions as a means for adding value to ticket packages
  - (a) The Houston Astros reserve 500 seats for each home game as \$25 "all-you-can-eat" seats in three mezzanine sections where fans can, through the seventh inning, consume unlimited hot dogs, nachos, popcorn, peanuts, soda and water <sup>25</sup>
  - (b) The Kansas City Royals partnered with Jack Stack Barbecue that makes the company the exclusive tailgate caterer of Kauffman Stadium, creating a unique opportunity for fans interested in having their tailgate parties catered who now have the ability to choose from a variety of buffet menus <sup>26</sup>
  - (c) Thanks to the promotion's popularity at the beginning of the 2015-16 season, the Detroit Red Wings added six additional game dates offering the "[Meijer Coke Zero Fan Pack](#)" (also a great example of sponsorship) which included two tickets, two slices of pizza or hot dogs and two soft drinks for \$67 for select home games
  - (d) Several teams are now partnering with local food trucks for special game-day promotions
    - (i) The Oklahoma City Dodgers teamed up with the Oklahoma Independent Food Truck Association to launch a "Food Truck Triple Play" promotion for a game leading up to 4<sup>th</sup> of July weekend
    - (ii) The Fresno Grizzlies unveiled a branded food truck dubbed "Wild Things" (a tribute to the team's original mascot) that would serve as a permanent fixture outside the team's stadium for home games
  - (e) Members of the 200-capacity "Concert Club" premium seating area at recently renovated State Farm Arena in Atlanta enjoy all-inclusive food and beverage (including in-seat delivery) for not just Atlanta Hawks games but also all concerts, according to the [Sports Business Journal](#)
  - (f) Rather than offering "all you can eat" options featuring traditional stadium fare like hot dogs and popcorn, MiLB's [River City Rascals](#) announced "All You Can Eat Theme" ticket packages for all their Thursday night games in 2019
    - (i) Each game featured a "specialty item of the night" (like rib tips, a mac-n-cheese bar, tater tot bar etc.), and also included all-you-can-eat options on other traditional stadium foods like hot dogs, lemonade and iced tea
    - (ii) Not surprisingly, the "All You Can Eat Thursdays" ticket package is one of the team's best sellers
- iii. "Social Selling" is a trend gaining momentum throughout the industry as a means for creating an additional sales channel and tool for reaching potential ticket buyers
  - (a) Many teams utilize Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and other social media platforms to communicate various ticket sales promotions to fans
    - (i) Last season, the Miami Dolphins [generated](#) over \$4 million in new season ticket sales through leads on Facebook

## Lesson 9.2

### Ticket Sales Strategies

#### A. Season tickets

1. **Season tickets** provide consumers with a ticket to every home game for a particular sport or event for one package price
2. Playoff (or post-season) tickets are not typically included with the package, however, teams have used the inclusion of playoff tickets as a powerful value-based incentive in the season ticket package
3. Season tickets typically provide the core revenue stream for most professional sports teams, colleges and universities
4. Most organizations include additional benefits for consumers purchasing season tickets to add value to their purchase
  - a. Texas Rangers full season ticket buyers receive a number of benefits, including:
    - i. 20% off concessions
    - ii. Bonus tickets for select months
    - iii. Complimentary coupons for upgrading seats on select dates
    - iv. Personalized season ticket holder name plate on seats
    - v. Private season ticket entrances
    - vi. Annual season ticket holder picnic with player autographs
    - vii. Season Ticket Holder End-of-Season Play Day on the field <sup>27</sup>
  - b. The Minor League Hockey Grand Rapids Griffins offer unique [benefits](#) for season ticket members, including invitations to exclusive events and discounts
    - i. A members-only entrance to the arena for early access to giveaways and concession promotions
    - ii. Guarantees to receive team promotional giveaways, regardless of when fans arrive to the game
    - iii. Opportunity to high-five the players as they come onto the ice during select games
    - iv. Invitations to members-only events, including a team autograph signing, post-game skate with select players and coach's chalk talk
    - v. Access to members-only concession stand lines
    - vi. Pre-sale opportunities to Detroit Red Wings games and discounts
  - c. The Brooklyn Cyclones make an effort to personalize season ticketholder benefits <sup>28</sup>
    - i. Membership to "Cyclones Nation", where ticketholders are issued a username and password providing access to an exclusive STH-only page on the Cyclones website, featuring an interactive blog, chats with the team's General Manager and additional discounts
    - ii. An opportunity to come take batting practice at the ballpark
    - iii. The chance to stand on the field, side-by-side with the Cyclones team for a group picture that ticketholders can download and print for free
    - iv. An exclusive invitation to see the team's first practice of the year
  - d. The Tijuana Toros of the Mexican League [offer](#) several unique benefits for their season ticket holders, including a seating section for the hearing impaired (complete with a sign language interpreter) and personalized seats with emblazoned names
  - e. Milwaukee Bucks season ticket holders were provided with the opportunity to get first look inside the team's new arena
5. Personal Seat Licenses <sup>29</sup>
  - a. A personal seat license (most often referred to as a PSL), gives the holder the right to buy season tickets for a specific seat within a stadium or venue

- b. Teams and venues typically offer PSLs as a means for generating additional revenue to help offset the debt incurred during the construction of the stadium or arena
    - i. The Golden State Warriors were the first team in the NBA to require a PSL for every single season ticket
      - (a) The strategy helped to finance their \$1 billion new arena (slated to open in 2019) <sup>30</sup>
    - ii. A [myfoxtatanta.com](http://myfoxtatanta.com) story suggests prices for PSLs range from \$1,700 up to \$150,000 per seat - Dallas Cowboys fans pay up to \$150,000 and on the low end of the scale, the Chicago Bears charge about \$1,700 for some seats
      - (a) According to [athleticbusiness.com](http://athleticbusiness.com), the Atlanta Falcons sold \$7.5 million in down payments alone for PSLs for their new stadium less than three months after putting them on sale
      - (b) In 2016, still a year away from playing in their new stadium, the Falcons had already sold out their \$45,000 Founders Club seats as well as their \$10,000 Piedmont Club seats according to [CNN](http://CNN).
    - iii. The LA Rams have suggested that when they move into their new stadium in 2019, *all* seats will be sold with a PSL
      - (a) Sports business analysts have suggested the franchise will be able to charge more than the Cowboys (\$150,000/seat) for their premier inventory
      - (b) The Rams began taking \$100 deposits on their website in 2016 to gauge fan interest and so many logged-on to sign up that the team's website crashed
    - iv. In 2018, the Las Vegas Review-Journal [reported](#) that seat licenses could cost Raiders fans between \$20,000 and \$75,000 each when the new stadium opened in Las Vegas in 2020
      - (a) In 2019, the team began the final phase of PSL sales (the least expensive offering) with a range of \$500 to \$4,000 per seat, with most locations in the upper levels of the stadium
      - (b) According to the [Las Vegas Review-Journal](#), the Raiders initially anticipated generating \$250 million in revenue through PSL sales, but with strong sales, the franchise expected to surpass the original revenue estimates
      - (c) When all was said and done, the team sold out of all of its available PSLs, doubling the original estimate with sales of nearly \$400 million prior to kick off of the 2020 season (before to the team's decision to play the inaugural season without fans) and the team now has a wait list for fans hoping to purchase a personal seat license
  - c. While PSLs have provided an excellent solution for generating revenue for many teams over the years, not all organizations have found the concept to be perfect. The Cleveland Browns recently announced that they would no longer require personal seat licenses for new season-ticket buyers while current season ticketholder/PSL owners would still maintain their original PSL benefits. <sup>31</sup>
    - i. In 2016, after two disappointing seasons, the San Francisco 49ers saw a substantial decrease in demand for their PSLs
      - (a) According to [Sports Business Daily](#), at one point there were over 1,800 licenses that were up for sale (representing 4,600 seats in Levi's Stadium), an increase of nearly 800 from the year prior
    - ii. Other than the Golden State Warriors, the Toronto Raptors are the only other NBA team that uses PSLs, and only for their premium seats
    - iii. The Milwaukee Bucks considered PSLs for their new arena, but decided it wasn't a workable business model
      - (a) Click [here](#) for a short video clip of Bucks' president Peter Feigin explaining the decision
- B. Ticket packages and mini-plans

1. A **ticket package** is a sales approach that involves grouping together a select number of games, often at a discounted price
  2. Teams generally offer a special rate and/or an additional benefit for committing to a greater number of games
  3. Packages offer flexibility for consumer purchases by requiring smaller financial and time commitments to purchase game or event tickets
  4. Examples
    - a. The Orlando Magic offer half season packages that include a number of customer benefits, including a free subscription to *E-Magic Insider* (e-mail newsletter) <sup>32</sup>
    - b. The Calgary Flames offer weekend packages that feature only weekend games, creating a special package to make it easier for fans to attend <sup>33</sup>
    - c. Because Monday night games are difficult days for teams to draw crowds, the Fort Myers Miracle created the "Monday Night Club" where, for \$30, "members" would receive a ticket to every Monday night home game through the entire season, free parking and a Monday Night Club t-shirt <sup>34</sup>
    - d. With hopes of boosting lagging attendance, the Arizona Diamondbacks launched a "Ballpark Summer Pass" ticket package that included every home game in June and July for only \$50
    - e. In an effort to drive attendance at early season games that typically are harder to sell, the Philadelphia Phillies released the "[Phillies Spring Pass](#)" ticket package for \$50 that included all Monday through Friday games in April (the team quickly sold out of the packages)
    - f. According to the [Indianapolis Star](#), the NFL's Indianapolis Colts announced plans to offer a five-game ticket package for the first time in history after season-ticket renewals declined for a third straight season in 2018
  5. Another popular ticket sales packaging strategy is to offer "flex" ticket plans
    - b. The "Orlando Flex" ticket package offers buyers access to a number of different parks, including Universal Studios, Sea World, Wet N Wild and Busch Gardens
      - i. Flex package purchasers only have to pay for parking once and the package is good for 14 consecutive days
      - ii. Flex package buyers can "jump" between parks as many times as they wish during those 14 days
    - c. The New York Mets offer flex packages of 5, 11, or 17 games
      - i. Fans have the luxury of choosing any games they want
- C. Season Ticket Equivalents
1. **Season ticket equivalents** refer to the sum of all of the various ticket packages sold converted to one measurable number
  2. Also referred to as FSE (full season equivalent)
  3. Examples
    - a. If the Washington Capitals sold 400 new quarter season packages, 800 new half season packages and 2,000 new full season packages in the off season, they would have sold 2,500 season ticket equivalents (FSEs)
- D. Group tickets
1. Group tickets are a reserved block of tickets for a specific game or event
  2. Groups usually require a minimum of ten or more individuals to qualify for group rates
    - a. Examples
      - i. Broadway.com offers group discounts to many Broadway shows and musicals, including "Rent" and "Blue Man Group" for groups of 10 or more <sup>35</sup>
      - ii. Colorado State University offers discounted ticket prices on all groups of twenty or more and features the group's name on the football video board while providing additional perks for the group leader, including complimentary tickets,



merchandise and autographed photos based on the number of fans in the group<sup>36</sup>

- i. Sea World offers group discounts for groups of 20 or more and provides bigger discounts for bigger groups<sup>37</sup>
  - (a) Groups of 20-49 receive 10% discount
  - (b) Groups of 50-99 receive 12.5% discount
  - (c) Groups of 100+ receive 15% discount
2. How important are group sales to an organization?
  - a. According to [espn.com](http://espn.com), when LeBron James announced his return to Cleveland, the team capped season ticket sales at slightly more than 12,000 tickets Friday, leaving roughly 8,000 tickets per game to be used for group sales and ticket plans, enabling them to introduce as many fans as possible to the product next season
    - i. That strategy will likely pay off, even as LeBron has moved on to Los Angeles, as group outings are typically easier to renew than season tickets
  - b. Click [here](#) for a great example of how building a dedicated group sales staff can boost an organization's bottom line from Front Office Sports: "*Oakland A's Focus on Group Sales Paying Dividends*"
3. In an effort to attract new fans and compete in a more competitive environment, many organizations have turned to unique "fan experience" packages to boost group ticket sales
  - a. Examples
    - i. With a minimum purchase of 75 group tickets, fans can sign up for the Boston Celtics "Halftime High Five Kids Tunnel" where up to 25 members of the participating group have (open to those 14 years and younger) the opportunity to actually get on the court and high-five the Celtics players as they come back onto the court after half-time<sup>38</sup>
    - ii. The Los Angeles Sparks have offered a "traveling practice" program where, if a group purchases 1,000 or more tickets, the team will hold a full practice at the site of the ticket buying group's choice<sup>39</sup>
    - iii. Through the team's "Court of Dreams" ticket package, Oklahoma City Thunder fans have the chance to play on the court before the game. The team has hosted students from more than 13 area high schools at the Ford Center who have participated in various basketball "competitions" with winners getting their game night seats upgraded.
      - (a) Thunder Vice President of Community Relations Dan Mahoney on the program: "*A lot of people would love to play on an NBA court, and through our group sales effort, we are able to provide that to our fans.*"<sup>40</sup>
    - iv. The Philadelphia Phillies have offered an "Out of Towner" weekend package created specifically for Phillies fans from around the country to visit Philadelphia while taking in a three-game series at Citizens Bank Park



**\* DISCUSSION IDEA \***



*The NBA's Milwaukee Bucks offer some creative group ticket options for fans, including unique "experience" packages. To provide some context for students, access the "Milwaukee Bucks Group Tickets" PowerPoint and share the examples with your students. The key take-away should be for students to understand how group tickets help teams like the Bucks to maximize ticket sales revenue. For more from the Bucks website, click [here](#).*

**E. Theme nights**

1. A specific ticket package designed exclusively for a particular group
2. The goal of a theme night is to attract large groups to attend a game or event by customizing the experience to meet the needs of the selected group/organization
3. Examples
  - a. The NBA's Charlotte Hornets host a Teacher Appreciation night, offering special promotional discounts on tickets for teachers <sup>41</sup>
  - b. The WNBA's Chicago Sky promote an annual Girl Scout night, providing specially priced tickets for area Girl Scouts, a chance to meet a Sky player, a "fan tunnel" experience on game day and exclusive autograph sessions <sup>42</sup>
  - c. Some of the theme nights hosted by the [Philadelphia Phillies](#) have included Autism Awareness, Teacher Appreciation, Philadelphia Science Festival Day and Citizens Bank Weather Education Day
  - d. Last season, the Oakland A's shifted their organizational strategy by hiring a dedicated sales staff to focus on group sales, and hosting theme nights like "Science of Baseball Day" which led to the sale of over 6,000 tickets
    - i. Click [here](#) to read more about the A's group sales strategy in a story posted on frontofficesports.com.
  - e. Thirteen of the fifteen theme night events hosted by the New Jersey Devils during the 2017-18 NHL season [reportedly](#) resulted in sellouts
    - i. As a result, the team increased the number of theme night promotions to include nineteen events last season, including "WWE Night", "Military Appreciation Day", and "Hockey Fights Cancer Night"

**F. Individual game and single game ticket sales (advanced sales)**

1. Many organizations promote the sale of individual game tickets to fans prior to the start of the season, game or event
2. Advance sales encourage fans to purchase tickets to individual events in advance to eliminate the risk of people changing their minds on the day of the game
3. Examples
  - a. The University of Wisconsin athletics office implements a policy that all reserved single game tickets MUST be purchased in advance and do not offer day-of-game (walk-up) single game sales. All day-of-game sales are general admission tickets only <sup>43</sup>

- b. The Detroit Red Wings encouraged fans to sign up for ticket updates through the team's "Red Wings eAlerts" program, offering "priority access" to single game tickets with no convenience charge before seats go on sale to the general public <sup>44</sup>
  - c. The Houston Astros offered a "one day opportunity" to fans subscribed to the team's email service. An offer for special promotional discounted tickets for future weekday games and lasted just one day (from 9:00 to 5:00). The promotion helped the franchise sell nearly 1,000 tickets. <sup>45</sup>
  - d. In 2020, SoFi Stadium executives took a unique approach to single-game sales when they began offering individual game tickets in luxury suites for LA Rams and Chargers games
    - i. According to [bizjournals.com](http://bizjournals.com), the team designed 36 suites specifically to be sold on a game-by-game basis, believing the L.A. market would be attract high-end corporate and individual buyers who want to attend Rams or Chargers games as one-off event without the long-term commitment typically associated with luxury suite sales
- G. Premium seat ticket packages
- 1. Premium seats are tickets to a game or event that feature additional benefits or values
  - 2. Premium seats could include anything from suites, courtside seats, or seats elsewhere that receive preferential or "VIP" treatment
  - 3. Examples
    - a. A company that leases a luxury suite at the Staples Center in Los Angeles receives tickets to each event throughout the year, including the Lakers (NBA), Clippers (NBA), Kings (NHL), Sparks (WNBA) concerts and family shows <sup>46</sup>
    - b. "Executive Club Seat Members" at the Georgia Dome in Atlanta receive VIP parking privileges, access to private "lounge" areas in the stadium (described online as "spacious, sun-filled atriums that feature living room style lounges with big screen televisions with specialty grills and buffets in both areas also offer food selections prepared to order") and access to exclusive concessions options <sup>47</sup>
    - c. The Saenger Theatre in New Orleans offers the following benefits for their premium seat buyers: The best seating locations available, priority upgrades during renewals, discount beverage coupons, exclusive Premium Seat Holder commemorative season poster and offers to other local events <sup>48</sup>
    - d. According to the *Sporting News*, the Miami Dolphins plan to install "Living Room Suites" at Sun Life Stadium, that will feature a transportation service that will pick up and drop fans off from home in a luxury vehicle and will enter and exit the stadium in their own private lane
      - i. Click [here](#) to read more about the Dolphins' plans for their new premium seating options for ticket buyers next season
    - e. According to [charlotteagenda.com](http://charlotteagenda.com), the Carolina Panthers are considering adding a variety of premium seating options at Bank of America Stadium, including owner's club suites, field bunker suites, party decks, 4-person semi-private seating, field-level suites, pre-game dining membership, practice field tailgating and an exclusive members-only club named the Carolina Club that could feature a high-end restaurant and lounge
    - f. In some instances, a team might offer "multi-use" opportunities to use stadium premium seating spaces for non-game day events
      - i. For example, the LA Rams offered suites that included "365-day access to SoFi Stadium", meaning the suite-holder could host business meetings and private parties at the stadium
      - ii. According to a story published by Sportico, Phoenix Suns' sponsor PayPal has special access to its luxury suite at Talking Stick Resort Arena even when the building is empty, where it has created a so-called "innovation center." The

program has been so successful that PayPal already extended their deal with the Suns and agreed to create a similar site at the home stadium of Spanish soccer club RCD Mallorca, also owned by Suns managing partner Robert Sarver.

(a) The success of PayPal's use of their luxury suite has inspired the Suns' to redesign the entire suite level as part of the arena's upcoming renovations

#### H. Walk up ticket sales and promotional sales

1. "Walk up" tickets refer to those tickets purchased by fans when arriving at the game, event or show
2. For sports teams, this is also referred to as *day of game* sales
3. Organizations plan creative promotions and offer special discounts to drive walk up ticket sales
  - a. Examples
    - i. The Georgia Aquarium encourages walk-up sales by offering a 20% discount to consumers who purchase online and arrive within the first two hours of the aquarium's opening hours <sup>49</sup>
    - ii. San Diego Gulls of the ECHL host a Disco night offering fans a discount if they come to the game in their disco outfits <sup>50</sup>
4. Why are walk-up ticket sales important?
  - a. When sales leading up to game or event day don't meet expectations, sometimes walk-up sales can help an organization to meet targeted sales
    - i. For example, with smaller crowds than anticipated early on for the 2017 NBC World Series Baseball Tournament in Wichita, organizers relied on walk-up sales to help keep pace with overall projected ticket revenue
      - (a) Said NBC World Series Tournament Director Kevin Jenks in an interview with ksn.com: *"Now what we are hoping to see is good weather, good match ups which I know we have in championship week and a lot more walk ups."* <sup>51</sup>

#### I. COVID-19 Impact on ticket sales

1. The loss of revenue from ticket sales during the pandemic as sports and entertainment organizations were forced to cancel events or play games without fans is crushing for the industry
  - a. College football
    - i. [USA Today](#) reports that last year, the 130 schools that make up the Division I Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) generated nearly \$1.1 billion in total football ticket sales, meaning hundreds of millions of ticket revenue would be lost when seasons were canceled or postponed
  - b. Broadway
    - i. According to [NBC New York](#), Broadway took in a record \$1.8 billion in ticket sales last year, but abruptly shut down in March and announced in the summer that the earliest they would return would be January of 2021
  - c. Concerts
    - i. [Pollstar](#) estimated the concert industry could lose as much as \$9 billion in 2020 in ticket sales revenue
  - d. NBA
    - i. NBA commissioner Adam Silver said during an interview at an [SBJ](#) virtual event that the league will lose 40% of its revenue with no crowds
  - e. NFL
    - i. A [Forbes](#) report suggested that, if the NFL were to play the entire 2020 season without fans in stands, the league could lose \$5.5 billion in stadium revenue (the sum of tickets, concessions, sponsors, parking and team stores)
  - f. MiLB
    - i. According to [MiLB](#), its teams generated gross revenues last year of \$864 million. The vast majority comes from game-day operations, with 60 percent from tickets

and concessions sales, wiping out millions of dollars when MiLB was forced to cancel the 2020 season

- g. Cirque du Soleil
  - i. According to [NBC News](#), Cirque du Soleil, the brand that successfully fused acrobatics with performance art, filed for bankruptcy Monday as the coronavirus continued to ravage the entertainment and theater industries
- 2. Pricing
  - a. With plans in place at some events to allow fans into stadiums at limited capacities, sports business professionals were forced to re-think pricing strategies
    - i. In one of first true tests of a sporting event taking place with fans, NASCAR's all-star race at Bristol Motor Speedway in Tennessee allowed just 25,000 fans into the track (less than 20 percent of its capacity), charging two general admission prices of \$35 and \$65 each rather than typical stadium seating that offers multiple price points, premium seating and hospitality areas (via [Charlotte Observer](#))

## Lesson 9.3

### The Ticket Sales Cycle

- A. Goal of sports and entertainment marketers
  - 1. The ultimate goal of sports and entertainment promotion according to Mullin, Hardy and Sutton is to “increase overall consumption of products or services through increased awareness and interest” <sup>52</sup>
    - a. Essentially, the goal is to increase overall levels of ticket sales
      - i. Tickets sales and television broadcast strategies frequently align – if an event does not sell enough tickets, often times the TV provider will ‘blackout’ the game, meaning they do not televise the event on local TV
        - (a) The idea is to push more consumers to buy tickets to see the event live versus simply watching it at home
        - (b) Click [here](#) to read how the Indianapolis 500 sold enough tickets to avoid a blackout on local TV for the first time since 1950
    - b. Sports and entertainment marketers achieve that goal by progressively gaining consumer commitment
    - c. This strategy is called the frequency escalator
    - d. Important because research indicates the long-term financial implications of an organization are impacted most by existing customers, not by attracting new consumers
    - e. On average, U.S. companies lose 50% of their customers in five years <sup>53</sup>
- B. Frequency escalator <sup>54</sup>
  - 1. The **frequency escalator** is a marketing tool that examines the attendance levels of fans<sup>54</sup>
    - a. This concept is also referred to as the fan escalator
    - b. The basic concept of the escalator is that sports and entertainment marketers focus not on getting new fans to games, but rather encourage those fans already attending to attend with more frequency with an increased level of commitment
  - 2. Unaware consumer
    - a. The unaware consumer does not know a product or service exists and therefore does not attend games or events
    - b. The sports and entertainment marketer reaches this group of consumers through:
      - i. Advertising
      - ii. Publicity
      - iii. Promotional items such as pocket schedules, magnet schedules etc.
  - 3. Indirect user
    - a. The indirect user is aware of the product or service, but does not directly participate by attending events, but rather consumes via another source (television, radio etc.)
    - b. The sports and entertainment marketer goal with indirect users is to do something to get them to act. This group of consumers can be reached through:
      - i. Promotional tickets
      - ii. Individual and single game tickets
      - iii. Theme nights
      - iv. Group nights
    - c. The marketer’s goal with this group is to move them to the next level of the frequency escalator. In this case, marketers are encouraging consumers to become light users.
      - i. For example, amid one of the biggest attendance declines in Major League Baseball this year, the Minnesota Twins launched a “flash sale” featuring \$5 tickets

- (a) According to Dan Hayes of [The Athletic](#), the team sold 31,000 tickets through the promotion in just 48 hours
  - (b) More significantly, however, is the fact that of the 31,000 tickets sold, 65 percent of fans hadn't purchased a ticket to a game in the past three seasons
- 4. Light user
  - a. Light users attend games and events for promotional giveaways, team performance and social interaction
  - b. Light users have no established attendance pattern
  - c. The sports and entertainment marketer reaches light users through:
    - i. More promotions, giveaways etc.
    - ii. Packaging strategies (offer the most popular opponents with a limited-edition bobble head doll etc.)
  - d. The marketer's goal with this group is to encourage them to become medium users (purchase a mini plan ticket package)
- 5. Medium user
  - a. Medium users attend less than half the times possible
  - b. Keys to reaching this group include:
    - i. Good service; developing a relationship with the customer
    - ii. Appeal to their pride and feeling of prestige for the team affiliation
    - iii. Encourage them with additional benefits such as improved seat locations and special discounts
    - iv. Show them value of their participation and further reward of advancing to the next stage of the escalator
      - (a) For example, an NBA team may encourage advanced participation through an invitation to a pre-game chalk talk or a "meet the team" type of function
- 6. Heavy user
  - a. Heavy users participate or attend more than half the times possible
  - b. Heavy users are the most important group to an organization, and it is critical to an organization's success that they make an effort to maintain them
  - c. Examples of heavy users
    - i. Season ticket holders
    - ii. Tom Cruise fans that see each of his films in the theater and purchase all of his DVDs
    - iii. Fans of the Dave Matthews Band who see the concerts each time they visit the fan's city and purchase all of their CDs
- 7. Descending the escalator
  - a. Descending the escalator occurs when consumers downgrade or eliminate their participation
  - b. Caused by consumer over-commitment or over-purchase
  - c. Is often a byproduct of fan disconnect or discord with "their" team, event, or favorite performers
- 8. Frequency escalator example
  - a. The University of Colorado's experiment with Groupon to heavily discount game tickets as way to attract new fans to the stadium provides an example of how an organization approaches the frequency escalator concept (the Buffaloes managed to sell nearly 1,200 tickets in less than 24 hours)
    - i. CU's marketing director summed up the frequency escalator concept with the following statement in an interview posted on clickz.com: *"While we would have liked to have sold more, we are happy with the results. What it does for us is potentially bring new people that may not otherwise go to a Colorado football game. It's a way to introduce them to our product, get them to a game...and then, who knows? Maybe next year they buy a three-game pack. The idea is to see if they go beyond this year."*<sup>55</sup>



## Lesson 9.4

### Ticketing Technologies

#### A. Distribution

1. Technology has streamlined the ticket distribution process
  - a. The Internet provides many access points for fans wanting to purchase tickets online
    - i. TicketMaster.com
    - ii. Individual team, league or event websites
    - iii. Secondary market vendors (StubHub, Vivid Seats and SeatGeek)
      - (a) ESPN's website now shows available tickets and a price range on their NFL schedule page with links to a secondary ticket market website
    - iv. Fandango.com
    - v. Social media
  - b. AT&T Park, home to Major League Baseball's San Francisco Giants, was the first professional sports franchise in the U.S. to implement a barcode system for scanning tickets as fans enter the stadium through electronic turnstiles <sup>56</sup>
    - i. This enables the team to avoid common ticketing problems
    - ii. Giants officials can quickly deactivate lost or stolen tickets and reissue new ones and the technology virtually eliminates the possibility of erroneously selling the same seat more than once
    - iii. The technology, along with many other advances, is now very prevalent in all sports venues, from the professional ranks to college
  - c. 2015 marked a major shift in ticket distribution and fan experience for attendees of the NCAA Men's NCAA Basketball Tournament as 67% of the host venues offered paperless and phone entry
    - i. Click [here](#) to see an excellent breakdown from forbes.com of the various ways in which fans could utilize technology to enter 2015 March Madness host venues
      - (a) Click [here](#) for an infographic from TiqIQ on the "paperless" NCAA tournament
  - d. Several sports teams (MLB's New York Yankees, Colorado Rockies, NFL's Seattle Seahawks, MLS's LAFC and NBA's Miami Heat among them) offer biometric fingerprint readings in lieu of tickets at specific entry points for speed and security <sup>57</sup>
    - i. Click [here](#) for a story suggesting Major League Baseball could be exploring a future where facial recognition becomes the norm for fan entry at ballparks
  - e. This season, Little Caesars Arena [announced](#) plans to move to a paperless system for all Detroit Pistons and Red Wings season ticketholders, allowing for a better user experience for fans <sup>58</sup>
  - f. As of 2020, many organizations had already made the shift to paperless tickets, however, after the COVID-19 health crisis, nearly every sports and entertainment venue will migrate to paperless ticketing protocols

#### B. Database and analytic marketing

1. Database marketing is the process of gathering information about existing and prospective customers, entering that information into a centralized database, and using that database to drive marketing efforts
2. Database marketing has enjoyed continued growth as the new trend in direct marketing among most sports and entertainment organizations
3. It enables marketers to capture information directly relating to their fan bases and allows for a more effective direct marketing campaign
  - a. Examples
    - i. Thanks to an effective database marketing strategy, Minor League Baseball's Indianapolis Indians managed to increase online ticket sales 64% in just one season. The club's focus on building and maintaining an extensive database

- resulted in access to the email addresses for 60,000 previous ticket purchasers and fans who had previously signed up to receive emails from the team.<sup>59</sup>
- ii. According to *Forbes*, the USTA has successfully used analytics to maximize revenue. For example, they analyze data around the primary and secondary market to determine how their tickets should be priced. Last year they repriced every seat in Arthur Ashe Stadium, and 54% of their seats had reduced prices for the 2018 U.S. Open.<sup>60</sup>
    - (a) Despite dropping ticket prices, the event generated \$10 million more in ticket sales revenue than the previous year's event<sup>60</sup>
  - iii. The Golden State Warriors utilize data from Facebook to purchase and create more personalized ads to help promote last minute ticket sales
    - (a) According to [adweek.com](http://adweek.com), each ad reached as many as 50,000 of the team's Facebook followers (potential buyers) and have helped the Warriors sell out 175+ straight games over the past few seasons<sup>61</sup>
  - iv. According to a report in the *Sports Business Journal*, the average NBA franchise has 500,000 names in its database, with some big-market teams having about 1 million names, allowing them to personalize the sales experience
  - v. Orlando City FC of MLS strategically designed its LionNation app to help the franchise build a database that would give insights to fan behaviors and preferences, along with creating opportunities to engage and interact with fans in ways that would lead to an increase in ticket sales
    - (a) Click [here](#) to learn more about the team's database marketing strategy
  - vi. According to [chicagobusiness.com](http://chicagobusiness.com), the majority of major league franchises in Chicago are encouraging fans to use digital tickets instead of traditional paper tickets by offering incentives from food discounts and faster entry into venues to credits toward special in-stadium experiences and merchandise
    - (a) Click [here](#) to read the full story with the headline "Why Chicago sports teams want you to use your phone as a ticket"
  - vii. Click [here](#) for an excellent, in-depth look at how Major League Baseball teams utilize analytics as a powerful ticket sales tool (via wharton.upenn.edu)
  - viii. According to a Yahoo! Sports [report](#), the NFL placed a priority on paperless tickets for the 2020 Super Bowl in Miami, in large part to maximize the personal data they could collect from fans who attended the game, which would help the league to develop a more targeted approach to its future marketing efforts
    - (a) A story published in the [Athletic](#) suggest that by the 2021 Super Bowl in Tampa, the number of fans using mobile ticketed entry could total nearly 100 percent (assuming fans would be allowed in stadiums as a result of the pandemic)
      - (i) The story also reports that, over the last two years, the NFL has added roughly 6 million new ticketing names to the league's database or individual teams' databases and now knows who 30 percent of the fans are sitting in the stands versus 15 percent the year before
4. By segmenting fans based on their buying habits and demographic information, an organization can effectively
- a. Generate new business
  - b. Boost renewal and retention rates
  - c. Establish sales leads
    - i. Most sports and entertainment organizations use database marketing to help qualify leads for their sales staff to make the cold calling process easier
  - d. Increase fan loyalty
  - e. Strengthen relationships with customers

- i. Segmentation allows for an organization to gain a better understanding of who their customers are and how best to satisfy customer needs and wants
  - f. Improve communications with fans
    - i. Click [here](#) for an interesting case study from the National Sports Forum's eNewsletter illustrating how the University South Carolina utilized the advancement of technologies to help them segment their fan base and boost ticket sales
- 5. **Data mining** is a term used to describe the process of collecting and analyzing information within a database in an effort to discover information that can help increase an organization's sales
  - a. The practice is also referred to as "big data" and advanced consumer profiling
  - b. Data mining has become a critical tool for many sports and entertainment organizations as it provides the sales staff with information that can help sellers to connect with consumers, particularly when cold calling
    - i. For example, thanks to data mining, an inside ticket sales representative for an MLS team might know that the fan they are cold calling has already attended two MLS games, searched ticket websites for other sporting events or concerts and typically only makes a purchase decision when tickets are discounted
    - ii. Spain's premier soccer league, LaLiga, [partnered](#) with Microsoft to utilize programs like Azure and Power BI to help LaLiga connect with their 1.7 billion fans around the world in a more personalized manner depending on fans' location and preferences
    - iii. The Chicago Cubs adopted Bypass, a point-of-sale system, to help them track how well certain merchandise and concessions sell in real time
      - (a) Said Justin Piper, general manager of spring training business operations for the Cubs in an interview with [AdAge](#): *"We can track categories—do you like little logos or big logos? What colors? Those are the types of things that we can start looking at."*
    - iv. According to [thedrum.com](#), Churchill Downs teamed with Emarsys, a marketing cloud company, to improve the level of insight they have on horse racing fans
      - (a) Data captured includes fans' favorite horses, jockeys, trainers as well as how much they bet on races
        - (i) This information is used to create more targeted and personalized marketing campaigns, resulting in higher profits
    - v. Click here for a fascinating look from the [San Francisco Business Times](#) on how the San Francisco 49ers (who employ an analytics staff of 11) and Oakland A's are mining data to help segment their fan base to help boost franchise revenues
- C. Service
  - 1. Many organizations have implemented online account manager programs for their season ticket holders as a vehicle for improving customer relations
    - a. Memphis Grizzlies season ticket holders enjoy many benefits via the team's Website, which allows customers to: <sup>62</sup>
      - i. Forward tickets electronically, allowing customers to email tickets to friends, family or clients—even at the last minute
      - ii. Manage tickets by tracking ticket usage and managing guest lists online
      - iii. Edit personal profiles to keep account info updated
      - iv. Make payments, view statements, and renew ticket packages
  - 2. Technology makes communication easier and more effective between teams and consumers
- D. Pricing, payment and sales
  - 1. Dynamic ticket pricing <sup>63</sup>

- a. Dynamic ticket pricing (also referred to as “variable” pricing) refers to the process of adjusting ticket prices on the basis of changing variables like weather, opponent, demand, availability or who is scheduled to pitch on a particular day
  - b. Many teams already charge different prices for seats based on the opponent or other factors, but the dynamic pricing allows an organization to manage ticket sales efforts by carefully measuring supply and demand and creating price points accordingly
    - i. For example, a Field Plaza level ticket at Petco Park in San Diego for a Saturday game against the rival Los Angeles Dodgers was priced at \$59.00 on padres.com. That ticket drops to \$35.00 for the same exact seat on the following Tuesday night for the game against the Arizona Diamondbacks.<sup>64</sup>
  - c. More than 50 percent of professional sports teams have now adopted some form of variable ticket pricing
    - i. Even NFL teams are getting into the action as the San Francisco 49ers announced in 2015 that tickets to ALL home games (for [single game tickets](#)) would be subject to a dynamic pricing structure
  - d. In 2018, Disneyland began testing dynamic pricing models with the opening of its Pixar Pier attraction, starting at \$299 per ticket
    - i. Part of Disney’s strategy is to better manage the size of crowds at its parks, helping to create a better experience for park visitors
    - ii. Click [here](#) to learn more about Disney’s strategy from slashfilm.com.
2. Digital Wallet
- a. According to Wikipedia, the term “[digital wallet](#)” refers to an electronic device that allows an individual to make electronic commerce transactions. This can include purchasing items on-line with a computer or using a smartphone to purchase something at a store.
    - i. Apple Pay and MasterCard teamed up with Major League Baseball to make mobile payments available at Great American Ball Park and the Duke Energy Convention Center for All-Star Game activities Cincinnati<sup>65</sup>
3. Blockchain
- a. In 2018, the NBA’s Dallas Mavericks [announced](#) that they would accept Bitcoin and other forms of cryptocurrency as payment for tickets, beginning with the 2018-19 NBA season
  - b. In her “Ruling Sports” [blog](#), sports industry expert Alicia Jessop asks “Can Blockchain Technology Change Ticket Sales In Sports?”
4. Help fans visualize seating options
- a. Last year, the Atlanta Hawks introduced “The Preview”, a high-tech virtual tour highlighting stadium renovation for potential suite and seat buyers
    - i. From the team’s [website](#): “Full of interactive features and engaging, self-guided activities, the sales center offers a deep dive into how the new arena transcends the role of host for basketball games, concerts and events”
  - b. In an example of an industry trend, teams are turning to virtual reality “sales centers” to help boost season ticket sales
    - i. To help sell season tickets to the team’s new \$200 million stadium in advance of their inaugural season in 2021, the Major League Soccer expansion Austin FC adopted virtual reality technology
      - (a) The digital technology provides fans with a 360-degree view from any seat inside the new venue, allowing prospective ticket buyers to get a feel for the stadium and their sightlines prior to making decisions on a seat location<sup>65</sup>
      - (b) The VR “show” starts by putting fans at the center circle on the field, giving a 360-degree view of what stadium will look like from the vantage point of a player waiting for the opening whistle

- (i) According to [SportsPro Media](#), last year the expansion MLS Minnesota FC franchise utilized the same tech which helped the team to completely sell out of their season ticket inventory before the stadium was even completed
    - ii. As the Texas Rangers (MLB) and Raiders (NFL) prepared for moves to new stadiums, they also built sales centers that featured innovative technology to create immersive experiences for prospective ticket buyers
      - (a) Click [here](#) for a 3D view of the new Rangers ballpark
      - (b) Click [here](#) for a 3D view of the new Raiders stadium
- 5. Digital marketing and social media applications provide a great example of how technology has advanced the role of ticket sales in sports and entertainment
  - a. Technology has a major influence on the effectiveness of database marketing strategies
    - i. Social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook proven to be as much as three times more effective in selling tickets than traditional marketing platforms, according to research from Ticketmaster <sup>66</sup>
- E. Drawbacks to advanced technology
  - 1. The selling of tickets by an unauthorized third party, called “ticket scalpers” or online brokers, has become commonplace online
    - a. This practice has a negative impact on an organization’s bottom line, and ultimately drives ticket prices up for consumers
    - b. The state of Florida recently toughened its ticket scalping laws to help consumers when Gov. Charlie Crist signed into law a new ticket resale bill that requires Internet brokers to offer better guarantees, outlaws the sale or use of “bot” software, and makes it illegal to scalp tickets to charity events <sup>67</sup>
    - c. In 2018, thousands of Chinese soccer fans fell victim to counterfeiting when they purchased fake World Cup tickets, which they didn’t realize until they had already landed in Russia for the tournament <sup>68</sup>
    - d. Because of a high risk of counterfeit tickets flooding the market during the NHL Playoffs, the St. Louis Blues took a proactive approach in alerting their fans via social media, tweeting: “Fans, please be cautious buying Playoff tickets via 3rd-party sellers outside @ScottradeCenter. There have been many fakes sold.”
  - 2. Sports and entertainment properties are now being challenged to adapt to the seismic growth and legalization of the secondary ticket market
    - a. Sports and entertainment properties are beginning to partner with secondary ticket sellers to share in the profits
      - i. StubHub boasts partnerships with St. John’s, USC, Wisconsin and Georgetown Athletics (among many others) as the “official ticket marketplace”
      - ii. RazorGator stakes its claim as the “official ticket package partner of the Ultimate Fighting Championship”
      - iii. Ticketmaster paid \$265 million for ticket reseller TicketsNow to secure a larger piece of the secondary market <sup>69</sup>
      - iv. TicketLiquidator launched in 2002 and boasts an inventory that includes more than 4 million tickets for over 83,000 events worldwide <sup>70</sup>
    - b. When they relocated back to Winnipeg, the Jets NHL hockey club (understanding the demand for tickets would be extremely high after quickly selling out of 13,000 season tickets) took a proactive approach to ticket resale. The team announced it would launch an extension of their website that would allow season ticket holders to post tickets they want to sell online and allow fans to buy them just like they would any concert or sporting event ticket.<sup>71</sup>

- c. In 2019, in hopes of improving profits for the franchise, the Los Angeles Dodgers launched a strategy to minimize sales on the secondary market by refusing to sell season tickets to brokers, allowing the team to regain (some) control of the market <sup>72</sup>



*This would be a good time to introduce the “Ticket Sales Plan Project” located in activities and projects folder. Remember, you can tailor each project to fit your presentation in class by opening (and editing) the PowerPoint file rather than the PDF.*

**\* ACTIVITY IDEA \***



*The following [New York Times](#) story entitled “Broadway Hits Make Most of Premium Pricing” offers insight on a number of topics that we have covered to this point, including pricing as a function of marketing, dynamic ticket pricing, supply and demand, premium VIP seating and how “star power” of certain celebrities can impact ticket sales. Share [this link](#) with students and see how many ticket sales related topics they can find.*

## **Unit 9 Key Terms Defined:**

**Data mining:** A term used to describe the process of collecting and analyzing information within a database in an effort to discover information that can help increase an organization's sales

**Frequency Escalator:** A marketing tool that examines the attendance levels of fans

**Group Tickets:** Group tickets are a reserved block of tickets for a specific game or event

**Season Tickets:** Provides consumers with tickets to every home game for a particular sport or full access to an entire event for a set price

**Season Ticket Equivalents:** Refers to the sum of all of the various ticket packages sold converted to one measurable number

**Ticket Package:** A sales approach that involves grouping together a select number of games, often times at a discounted price



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TEACHER NOTES

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