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The Role of Recovery Marketing to Recapture a Sport Market over the Past Decade: From Travel and Tourism to Professional and Amateur Sport Business

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ABSTRACT

Recovery marketing can be defined as the actual or possible regaining, restoration, or improvement of something lost or taken away as a result of a significantly negative situation or event through the transfer of goods and services from producers to consumers. This article seeks to elaborate on the concept of recovery marketing historically and in terms of the sport industry, and how sport marketing efforts can be utilized in various situations to recuperate from negative scenarios. In addition, suggestions will be presented regarding the creation of a recovery marketing plan for sport organizations, as well as propositions for future research.

INTRODUCTION

Recovery marketing is a prevalent concept in the world of marketing in business – especially the travel, tourism, and hospitality industries. However, there has been little coverage in the realm of sport marketing management. A decade ago, Burton and Howard (2000) stated “for sport marketers, the concept of recovery entails returning a disaffected customer to satisfaction after a service breakdown – one that is often unexpected and unscripted”, with a broad focus on strikes, lockouts, illegal activities, poor performance, and misunderstood intentions that jeopardize brand equity, and the inclusion of the National Basketball Association’s (NBA) recovery marketing program. Since 2000, much has changed in the sporting landscape, and has created the need for revisiting recovery marketing and its importance to the sport industry.

Recovery marketing can be defined as the actual or possible regaining, restoration, or improvement of something lost or taken away as a result of a significantly negative situation or event through the transfer of goods and services from producers to consumers. Significantly negative situations traditionally have been defined in recovery marketing as natural disasters, government and politically-motivated crises, and health related crises. For the sport industry, many of these negative situations may also have an effect – especially natural disasters – but are often extended to strikes, lockouts, and work stoppages; and folding and subsequent re-establishment of teams and leagues. The purpose of this article is to elaborate on the concept of recovery marketing historically and in terms of the sport industry, and how sport marketing efforts can be utilized in various situations to

recuperate from negative scenarios. In addition, suggestions will be presented to aid sport marketing professionals in the creation of a recovery marketing plan for their organization, and propositions for researchers to consider for future research to enhance the body of knowledge in recovery marketing for the sport industry.

RECOVERY MARKETING – AN OVERVIEW

Recovery marketing is a common concept in marketing – especially the travel, tourism, and hospitality industries – as related to the real or potential recapturing or enhancement of a market due to loss that resulted from a significantly negative scenario. Much of the previous work on recovery marketing focused on crisis management, and market recovery and communications – specifically as related to communication during tourism crises, evaluating strategies for market recovery, and comprehending these issues from the viewpoint of the destination management organization (Carlsen and Liburd, 2007). In fact, according to research by Dwyer and Sheldon (2006), the six main research categories as related to crisis management and marketing recovery and communications were: (1) clarification of definitions, concepts, and typologies; (2) risk identification and assessment; (3) managing recovery and restoration; (4) marketing and promotion during and after the crisis; (5) rebuilding the destination; and (6) sustainable tourism development from a risk management perspective (Carlsen and Liburd, 2007). Of most direct relevance to recovery marketing is marketing and promotion during and after the crisis. This would include the ethical and corporate responsibilities in marketing and promotions during the crisis – including whether marketing and promotions should be conducted at all during the crisis; the similarities and differences between recovery marketing and marketing during normal operations; determining the level of demarketing to be applied during and after the crisis – which are efforts that seek to reduce (not eliminate) the demand for a product or service until they return to an acceptable level of operations; formulating a strategy for using the media to aid in recovery; evaluating the overall impact of the crisis in terms of reputation and image; and overhaul the strategic marketing plan to move the organization forward (Carlsen and Liburd, 2007).

Through this research on crisis management, and market recovery and communications, numerous recovery marketing strategies have been articulated through the literature including the role of boundaries in studying the needs for recovery marketing, the complexity of recovery marketing in terms of chaos theory, and the function of social networks to aid in recovery marketing efforts. With regard to the role of boundaries, the goal is to employ a systems perspective to focus on the impacts of a crisis, how the impact is transfer to all parts of the internal and external organization, and how this information can assist to identify the range of stakeholders involves, the factors that will most readily increase the speed of recovery, and the intensity of actions in terms of factors causing those effects (Scott, Laws, and Prideaux, 2007). Chaos theory, which is sometimes referred to as the theory of apparent randomness, rationalizes that elements of system behavior are “intrinsically unstable and not amendable to formal forecasting” (Scott et al., 2007), hence that since these systems are complex and sensitive to change, the unexpected results often give the impression of randomness. As a result of this complexity, recovery marketing efforts must be forecast utilizing multiple precise and patterned approaches. With social networks, recovery marketing efforts are focused on structuring the flow of information through various communication channels to elicit feedback for innovative solutions and clear leadership, therefore becomes a series of interacting organizations that exchange information, share customers, and exchange resources (Scott et al., 2007). By analyzing these social networks and the relationships forged, it provides a means of simplifying the process of “promoting effective collaborations; supporting critical junctures in networks that cross functional, hierarchal, or geographic boundaries; and ensuring integration within groups following strategic restructuring initiatives (Scott et al., 2007; Cross, Borgatti, and Parker, 2002). Regardless of the boundaries, complexity, or social networks, the standard means of measuring recovery is by the success of an organization in restoring business flows to an earlier trend line may not be adequate because this

benchmark it does not take into account the adaptation that may take place during the crisis and ensuing recovery period processes (Scott et al., 2007).

The need for recovery marketing has been extensive in the travel and tourism industry, especially in the past decade where there seems to be a significant increase in frequency of these negative events. However it is probable that the frequency has not changed; the increase global coverage of the media has brought it more to the forefront of our consciousness (Pforr and Hosie, 2007). In preparing to implement a recovery marketing effort, “preparedness and sensibilization and the initial response to crises are core themes where communication, information, and confidence” (Pforr and Hosie, 2007) in the product or service are crucial to effective execution of a plan. Each recovery marketing plan is unique and cannot address every situation that may occur, however it should address as many demographical, environmental, sociological, economic, political, and legal issues as possible. In addition, a positive relationship with the mass media is critical to the successful implementation of a recovery marketing plan with regard to quality information management and communication to stakeholders (Pforr and Hosie, 2007; Santana, 2004).

Recovery marketing plans are traditionally executed because of some crisis or disaster. A crisis describes a situation where “the root cause is, to some extent, self inflicted through such problems as inept management structures and practices or a failure to adapt to change” (Pforr and Hosie, 2007; Faulkner, 2001). A disaster is defined as “a multilevel, complex, and damaging event that unfolds over time and space through an emergent complex interaction of elements involving structures, connection and networks and which are shaped by ideological, economic and social factors to generate impacts on elements of society that change the performance of the normal order of the societal setting” (Pforr and Hosie, 2007). The key difference is the control factor – crisis usually can be prevented or controlled with proper preparation and management, whereas a disaster is usually sudden, unpredictable, and potentially uncontrollable. Hence, when a recovery marketing plan is developed, understanding whether the recovery effort is due to a crisis or a disaster is vital to the proper implementation and management of the plan.

The need for recovery marketing plans has come from the increased market-oriented strategies that are being implemented by businesses to maintain a competitive advantage through the portrayal of a business culture and organizational aptitude that puts customers first (Martin-Consuerga, Esteban, and Molina, 2007; Deshpande, Farley, and Webster, 1993; Kohli and Jaworski, 1990; Narver and Slater, 1990). As such, these recovery marketing plans “place the highest priority on the creation and maintenance of superior customer value, and creating a competitive advantage in both the speed and effectiveness of their responsiveness to opportunities and threats (Martin-Consuerga et al., 2007; Slater, 2001). By having a market oriented strategy as part of the recovery marketing plan, managers have the ability to deal more effectively with a crisis or disaster by being able to coordinate structures within the organization to handle uncertainties in what often is a rapidly changing environment (Martin-Consuerga et al., 2007; Kuada and Buatsi, 2005). These uncertainties are often significantly negative situations, which traditionally have been defined in recovery marketing as natural disasters (e.g. Indian Ocean tsunami, Australian bushfires, hurricanes and typhoons in the Atlantic and Pacific); government and politically-motivated crises (e.g. Fijian political coup in 2000, ongoing issues in the Middle East); and health-related crises (e.g. 2001 Foot and Mouth disease outbreak in the United Kingdom, severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) outbreak in 2003; Swine Flu (H1N1) pandemic in 2009).

Marketing recovery campaigns are a key component of destination recovery after natural disasters (Armstrong and Ritchie, 2007). A key component of a marketing recovery plan for natural disasters is the crisis communication plan. Once thought of as only a major component of risk management, it has grown to be a crucial part of marketing recovery. Communication is an important element in marketing recovery after a natural disaster, and a comprehensive communication strategy is necessary for marketing professionals to be proactive and effective rather than reactive and

inefficient (Armstrong and Ritchie, 2007; Ritchie, 2004). This is especially true when monitoring and managing media reporting, as exaggerated and sensational reporting is often beyond the true scope of the disaster. This often results in the creation of a recovery marketing campaign for use in the short and medium term to control media coverage, notify consumers and stakeholders about the status of efforts, and recapture consumer confidence (Armstrong, 2007; Ritchie, Dorrell, Miller and Miller, 2003). A key component of this recovery marketing campaign is the recovery marketing plan.

A prime example of the need for a recovery marketing plan was during the bushfires in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) in January of 2003. The ACT was ill prepared to deal with a natural disaster of this magnitude, and did not have a crisis communication plan or a recovery marketing plan in place. As a result of communication with other regions of Australia, the development of plans for the future included creating a crisis communication plan and a recovery marketing plan, which involved the following steps: (1) rapidly developing and implementing a marketing campaign as soon as realistic; (2) have access to funding for the marketing campaign; (3) consult with stakeholders in the creation of the marketing messages; (4) ensure that there is consistency in the messages being communicated through all parts of the marketing campaign; (5) and implement a perception management plan to ensure the correct image is being communicated – making sure that what is communicated is honest, sincere, and direct (Armstrong and Ritchie, 2007).

In December 2004, the Indian Ocean was struck by a massive tsunami that severely impacted many nations including Thailand and Sri Lanka. However, not all nations in the Indian Ocean Region were affected physically by the tsunami. The island nation of the Maldives, a significant destination spot southwest of India and Sri Lanka, was relatively unaffected by the physical aspect of the tsunami, but the perception was that they were. Tourism decreased significantly, and required the creation of a marketing recovery strategy, especially in the short-term to stop cancellations by using the media to correct the incorrect perception (Carlsen and Hughes, 2007; Carlsen, 2006). According to Carlsen (2006), the actions implemented as part of the recovery marketing plan included offering familiarization trip for media from all major markets; broadcasting the status of the tourism industry reported on the local media – especially television and radio; attending international trade shows and promotional fairs; producing road shows and promotional workshops in major markets; purchasing advertising on international television and other media; having high-level delegations meet with tour operators and government officials in all major markets; hanging welcome banners at the airport; distributing a bi-monthly electronic newsletter to update status; offering joint destination promotions with major tour operators and airlines; and conducting continued market research on the perceptions of tourists in the Maldives (Carlsen and Hughes, 2007; Carlsen, 2006).

In general, the results from the implementation of a marketing recovery plan needs to provide a guarantee to customers and stakeholders that they will be able to continue to experience the features of the product and/or service they consider to be most valuable to them, despite any impact from a natural disaster (Prideaux, Coghlan, and Falco-Mammone, 2007). However, it is equally important that the recovery marketing plan be created in advance of a natural disaster – not during, and addresses all customers and stakeholders – including tourists and local residents (Rittichainuwat, 2006). This is significantly important because the speed of recovery depends on the degree to which marketing communication and recovery plans have been integrated with disaster and risk management strategies and plans (Rittichainuwat, 2006). In addition, the scope of damage, the efficiency and effectiveness of making facilities operational, and a clear marketing message that the area is open for business is crucial to success implementation of a recovery marketing plan (Durocher, 1994). Ultimately, the goal of the recovery marketing plan is to ensure that all products and services are exposed in marketing campaigns to a maximum number of target markets in an altruistic manner by promoting strengths (Pike, 2007) and downplaying weakness, while taking advantage of new opportunities and avoiding threats to success.

RECOVERY MARKETING IN SPORT

While there may be coverage of recovery marketing efforts in literature on sport business management under the categories of crisis communication and risk management, there is relatively little information published under the category of recovery marketing. In 2000, Burton and Howard published what appears to be one of the few article focused on recovery marketing in sport, titled "Recovery Strategies for Sports Marketers: The Marketing of Sports Involves Unscripted Moments Delivered by Unpredictable Individuals and Uncontrollable Events". In this article, the authors state three major facts: (1) "those employed in sport marketing must be prepared for unexpected, often negative actions that jeopardize a sport organization's brand equity"; (2) "the negative actions tend to inflame public opinion or alter fan perceptions"; and (3) "these events tend to create an immediate economic reaction that can distract senior management and impede organizational performance" (Burton and Howard, 2000).

"Strikes, lockouts, illegal activities, poor performance, and misunderstood intentions" (Burton and Howard, 2000) had previously been the main focus of recovery marketing efforts in sport business. However, since 2000, much has changed in the sporting landscape, and the evolution of recovery marketing in other fields – especially the travel and tourism industry - has created the need to revisit recovery marketing and its application to the sport industry. In travel and tourism, natural disasters are a significant focus as related recovery marketing, and this is the same in sport – especially after Hurricane Katrina in 2005 and its effects on the city New Orleans. However, in professional and amateur sport business, recovery marketing is often extended to strikes, lockouts, and work stoppages; and the folding and subsequent re-establishment of teams and leagues.

Natural Disasters

Over the past decade, there has not been a more significant natural disaster to hit the United States then when Hurricane Katrina hit the Gulf Coast region of Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida. Among the worst hit area was the city of New Orleans, home to numerous professional sport organizations (New Orleans Saints of the National Football League (NFL); New Orleans Hornets of the National Basketball Association (NBA); New Orleans Voodoo of the Arena Football League (AFL). According to Baade and Matheson (2007), as a result of the disaster:

- The New Orleans Saints played their home games at the Meadowlands in New Jersey (1 game), San Antonio (1 game), and Baton Rouge, Louisiana (6 games at the home of Louisiana State University – over 80 miles WNW in an area partially affected by the disaster).
- The New Orleans Hornets played the majority of their games for two years (36 of 41 in 2005-2006; 35 of 41 in 2006-2007) in Oklahoma City – 725 miles away.
- The New Orleans Voodoo abandoned their entire 2006 schedule.

Each team had a unique challenge that required a different recovery marketing plan. Of the three teams, the New Orleans Saints seemed to have the biggest challenge. The Louisiana Superdome, which was used to house displaced residents, was damaged both as a result of the storm and its use as a shelter – which created a significantly negative image for the facility. In addition, the owner of the Saints, Tom Benson, sought to potential move the team to his home town of San Antonio, citing the concern that post-Katrina New Orleans may not be able to support a NFL franchise. The recovery marketing plan including a \$294 million bond issue that financed the repair, and a marketing plan that included: (1) using the Superdome as a symbol of New Orleans' ability to survive and recover from the impact of this natural disaster; (2) working with the NFL to temper Tom Benson's desire to move the franchise, which would result in facilitating financial transfers to the Saints from the city of New Orleans; (3) working with the "Bringing Back New Orleans Commission" to market the city as a "major-league" city with a NFL Franchise – which was a challenge because the 'new' New Orleans became the second smallest city with a NFL franchise after

Green Bay; (4) marketing to residents to embrace the team as a symbol of rebirth in New Orleans – which resulted in a record number of season tickets being sold for the 2006 season (the first year the dome reopened) (Baade and Matheson, 2007). However, shortfalls in their recovery marketing plan in the short-term misinterpreted corporate and small-business support because they had bigger priorities than involvement with the New Orleans Saints. 40% of the luxury boxes in the Superdome remained unsold in the first year, which significantly hampered the ownership because since that revenue is not part of the NFL's revenue sharing agreement, the ownership of the New Orleans Saints lost out on significant profits (Baade and Matheson, 2007).

With regard to the New Orleans Hornets, they had one significant challenge. As a result of damages to the New Orleans Arena, the team moved operations for two years to Oklahoma City, Oklahoma – 725 miles away. Since they only had been in the city for three years prior to Hurricane Katrina, they were only starting to build a significant fan base and relationship with the city of New Orleans. By then leaving the city for the majority of the next two seasons (although they did keep New Orleans as part of the team name), they effectively lost the majority of their notoriety and goodwill previously built up. When the team returned to New Orleans for the 2007-2008 season, the recovery marketing plan was a combined effort between the team and the NBA. The Hornets, recognizing the significant change in the city post-Katrina, sought to connect with returning business, fans, and newcomers to the fan base by instituting three “mini plans”: (1) a 15-game weekend plan; (2) a 15-game super plan which included 13 playoff teams; visiting players including LeBron James, Kobe Bryant, Shaquille O’Neal, and Allen Iverson; and the opening night game signifying the permanent return to New Orleans; and (3) a 10-game mini-plan marketed as “the most affordable sports ticket in New Orleans” – with half of the plan including ‘desirable’ games such as the Los Angeles Lakers and Phoenix Suns (Licht, 2007). For the NBA's part, they engaged in a serious marketing campaign after the 2007 All-Star Game in Las Vegas to promote the return of basketball in New Orleans – culminating in bringing All-Star Weekend to the city during the Hornets' first season back.

For the New Orleans VooDoo of the Arena Football League, the recovery marketing effort was also a combined effort between the league and the team. The AFL's support came in the form of awarding the next two Arena Bowl championship games (2007 and 2008) to the city of New Orleans. For the team's part, their marketing campaigns focused on low-cost sports entertainment with fan experiences, and the development of programs that benefited the community, youth and charities in the Gulf South region - which resulted in setting an Arena Football season ticket record with over 13,000, and an average announced attendance of 16,645 (New Orleans VooDoo, 2008).

Strikes, Lockouts, and Work Stoppages

Any time a league has a strike, lockout, or work stoppage, there will be negative effects in the eyes of the consumer – especially considering many of the arguments for these stoppages are money-related, and the owners and athletes are receiving exorbitant salaries as compared to the majority of the general public. As a result, when the league plans to return to operations, there is a need to implement a recovery marketing plan to get the fans back into the seats. In an interview conducted by Richard Burton and Dennis Howard (2000), Rick Wells, the former Chief Marketing Officer (CMO) from the NBA explained the National Basketball Association's (NBA) recovery marketing program after the 1998-1999 lockout. The steps included (1) collecting and understanding the tools which could be utilized by the league, teams, and players; (2) assembling a representative group of team executives (ranging from coaches, general managers and presidents to marketing and public relations people) to discuss relaunching the NBA; (3) creating, critiquing, and improving the plan until a consensus was reached that the plan was strong; (4) recognizing that the concepts of fan apathy, disappointment, and anger cannot be solved through marketing – therefore all marketing needed to be sincere and direct; and (5) creating multiple plans that covered multiple scenarios ranging from a shortened season (which is what was eventually used) to a complete cancellation (Burton and Howard, 2000).

A league that needed to implement a recovery marketing plan as a result of the complete cancellation of a season was the National Hockey League (NHL). In February 2005, the NHL cancelled the 2004-2005 season after the owners had locked out the players earlier in the year to restructure the finances of the league in terms of lower salaries and concessions. For their recovery marketing plan, the NHL outsourced to numerous companies including entertainment marketing firm Conductor, a stalwart in movie marketing; PH.D. for media buying services; CarryOn Communication for strategic brand and consumer public relations; and Rogers and Cowan for entertainment public relations (“NHL will follow...”, 2005). The goal was to start off with a traditional marketing and promotional blitz that included broadcast, print, outdoor and digital media, and expanded to the creation of original programming based on NHL players, teams and fans for television, the Internet and film (“NHL will follow...”, 2005).

Folding and Subsequent Re-Establishment of Teams and Leagues

With the prospect of relocations of teams, it is inevitable that a city may need to engage in a recovery marketing effort. According to Howard and Crompton (2003), “When a city loses a sports franchise, it may create the impression that local businessmen and politicians are incompetent, that the community is declining or a “loser,” and that its residents lack civic pride. Indeed, it may be worse for a city’s image to lose a major event or major league team than never to have had one at all.” As a result, municipalities often must engage in a recovery marketing plan to both improve that image and hopefully attract a ‘replacement’ sport franchise. Over the past 10 years, while there have been no professional sports relocations in baseball, football, or hockey from one United States city to another, the NBA has had two. The Charlotte Hornets moved to New Orleans, and the city actively engaged in a recovery marketing plan that resulted in getting the expansion franchise Charlotte Bobcats two years later. The Seattle SuperSonics moved to Oklahoma City in 2008, and the city is actively engaged in a recovery marketing plan that has the goal of securing an expansion team within five years.

With regard to leagues, two examples of professional sports leagues that have folded during the past 10 years and are seeking to re-establish themselves in the marketplace are women’s soccer and arena football. The Women’s United Soccer Association (WUSA) was formed in 2000 in an effort to build on the popularity of women’s soccer in the United States shortly after hosting and winning the 1999 FIFA Women’s World Cup. The league failed after the 2003 season due to being in debt over \$100 million. However, in 2006 discussion of relaunching the league was started, with a goal of starting play in 2009. The recovery marketing plan included a new name for the league (Women’s Professional Soccer – WPS); creating a logo with the silhouette of the United States’ most famous women’s soccer player – Mia Hamm; town meetings at soccer conventions and communities where teams will be placed (to increase fan interaction and involvement); and hiring Adrenalin, a full-service branding, marketing and design agency that specializes in supporting the brand-expansion goals of sports organizations around the world by developing, expanding and differentiating brands to drive revenue through strategic planning, campaign development, logo design, collateral materials creation, advertising direction, multimedia design and other creative marketing services (BusinessWire, 2008).

As far as the Arena Football League, the main league (AFL) folded in 2008 due to the inability to agree on a feasible economic and business plan for future operations, and their subsequent filing of Chapter 7 bankruptcy. The following year, the developmental league (af2) ceased operations because none of the teams would commit to the following year while potential restructuring of the AFL was ongoing. This restructuring took place in 2010 with the return of the Arena Football League – starting its first year with a combination of former AFL and af2 franchises. The recovery marketing efforts all are hinged on the mission of the league: “to serve our community with pride and passion as a quality example of individual and team excellence on the field, in the office, at the arena and

within the community by consistently exceeding our customers' expectations by demonstrating the highest character, appreciation and respect for our game, customers, teammates and partners as a cost-effective and visionary organization providing a total entertainment experience" (AFL, 2010). According to league commissioner Jerry Kurz, central to this recovery is having a stronger business model than in the past, since the former league's demise was a function of the severe recession in the United States and rising league costs, not lack of fan interest and support (Knoblauch, 2010). In addition, additional parts of the recovery effort include partnering with the NFL Network to broadcast games, and expansion to markets that were successful with their former AFL or af2 teams.

IMPLICATIONS FOR MARKETING PRACTITIONERS

The practical implications for recovery marketing in the sport industry come from the increased market-oriented strategies that are being implemented by businesses to maintain a competitive advantage. The major goal is to deal more effectively with a negative scenario by being able to coordinate all internal and external constituencies of the sport organization. Central to the coordination of these decision-making and problem-solving processes is the creation of a comprehensive sport marketing recovery plan. Sport marketing professionals need to be versed in the creation of a recovery marketing plan for their organization. The following is a proposed list of steps sport marketing professional need to consider when developing, implementing, managing, and evaluating a sport marketing recovery plan:

- Identify the Purpose of the Sport Marketing Recovery Plan
 - Plans for Rebuilding, Redevelopment and Renewal
 - In terms of definitions, concepts, and typologies
- Conduct Primary and Secondary Research to Identify and Assess
 - Determine Extent of Crisis and Level of Recovery Needed
 - Analyze Risks (Physical, Emotional, and Financial)
 - Assess Stakeholder Behaviors (Attitudes, Perceptions, Motivations)
- Develop a Sport Marketing Crisis Communications Plan
 - Convening a Crisis Communication Team
 - Develop Crisis Communication Strategies to the Public and Mass Media
 - Planning before Going Public
 - Managing Going Public
 - Evaluation of Crisis Communication Efforts
- Implement and Manage a Sport Marketing Recovery Campaign
 - Develop a Escalation Plan
 - Monitoring and Managing Media Coverage
 - Notification of Stakeholders
 - Recapture Stakeholder Confidence
- Manage the Sport Marketing Recovery and Restoration Process
 - Assess and Control Internal Processes and Decision Points
 - Appraise External Processes and React to Environmental Changes
 - Adjust Market Penetration Strategies
 - Update and/or Modify Distribution Strategies
 - Amend Process based on Changes in Economic, Political and Social Conditions

- Collect Feedback and Evaluate the Sport Marketing Recovery Plan
 - Enhance Strength
 - Improve on Weakness
 - Identify Future Opportunities
 - Recognize Threats to Continued Recovery

While almost any sport organization could use a sport marketing recovery plan in their back pocket, probably no entity may need one sooner than the National Football League (NFL). Currently, the NFL is in the last season with a salary cap, meaning that the 2010 year will be uncapped, allowing players to earn an unlimited cap in salary, and also allowing the higher revenue teams and rich team owners such as the Dallas Cowboys, Washington Redskins, and New England Patriots to spend an exorbitant amount of money to 'buy' the best players. However in retrospect, most owners do not want to see the salary cap go away, and would rather lock out the players in 2011 when the collective bargaining agreement expires. If the NFL gets to this point, everyone will lose. Owners, especially those with a heavy debt load, will lose the revenue they need to pay off their loans. Players will receive a fraction of what they would be making through the strike fund, and considering the lifestyle of many players, this will result in significant financial hardship. In addition, owners and players both will be alienating the fans who have made the NFL the most popular sport in the United States, which may knock the NFL off that pedestal. As a result, the NFL should be thinking now about how a recovery sport marketing plan would be help to maintain their spot as the number one sport.

There are also additional applications throughout the global sport industry where recovery marketing should be researched. One prime example would be with regard to the relegation of football (soccer) teams in major leagues around the world, such as the English Premier League, the Bundesliga in Germany, Serie A in Italy, and La Liga in Spain. Taking the English Premier League as an example, the last three teams on the ladder/in the standings are relegated to the Football League Championship (or effectively one division lower), and three teams are elevated to the Premier League. According to a report by Deloitte as detailed by Emery (2010), moving up to the Premier League from the lower division "can benefit a club to the tune of £90 million" (approximately \$129.5 million USD), which includes an immediate impact of £40 million (\$57.5 million USD) the next season. Should the team be relegated back to the lower division after one year, they will still reap approximately £48 million in parachute payments over the next four years (Emery, 2010). However, regardless of those parachute payments, how does a team restore their image once relegated, as well as make up for the loss of nearly £28 million (\$40 million USD) of revenues they would have had if they were not relegated?

Another interesting application of recovery marketing in sport could be for municipalities that spend up to 10 years and millions of dollars on trying to secure a bid to host the Olympics, but come up short. In October 2009, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil was awarded the 2016 Summer Olympic Games, beating out Chicago, Illinois; Tokyo, Japan; and Madrid, Spain, each of which spent up to \$100 million US each on their losing bid (Smith, 2009). How does a city recover not only from being denied hosting the largest and most prolific sporting event in the world, but from the loss of money that could have been spent elsewhere? In general, each municipality should be utilizing their bid documents to create and implement a recovery marketing plan to prove to their communities, external sporting organizations, and the world that their cities are top-notch destinations for major sporting, cultural, and social events in the future. However, instead of just using the bid documents after the unsuccessful bid, the creation of a recovery sport marketing plan should be a part of the planning process for any Olympic bid, and the modification of that plan should take place throughout the implementation, management, and evaluation process.

An additional area where research can be conducted about the use of recovery marketing would be as a result of scandals by players in professional sports. This can range from player involvement in

gambling or point-shaving to players accused or proven guilty of illicit drug or performance-enhancing drug use, and can easily be extended to athletes involved in a variety of criminal activities who are looking to overhaul their image.

A final application where recovery marketing can be examined would be in marketing of amateur sports after any number of negative scenarios including NCAA sanction due to rules violations, criminal acts by players and coaches (gambling/point-shaving; illicit and performance-enhancing drug use; intentional torts), elimination of major and minor sports (budgets; Title IX), and downward NCAA reclassification (Division I → Division II; Division II → Division III).

CONCLUSION

While recovery marketing plans have been prevalent in the travel, tourism, and hospitality industries, it has become increasingly apparent that professional and amateur sport organizations need to consider the importance of developing a sport marketing recovery plan within their risk management, crisis communication, and marketing plan development processes. The importance of these recovery marketing efforts helps to provide a guarantee to customers and stakeholders that they will be able to continue to experience the features of the product and/or service they consider to be most valuable to them, despite any impact from a crisis (Prideaux, Coghlan, & Falco-Mammone, 2007). The ultimate goal of recovery marketing efforts are to ensure that all products and services are exposed in marketing campaigns to a maximum number of target markets in an altruistic manner by promoting strengths, downplaying weakness, taking advantage of new opportunities, and avoiding threats to success (Pike, 2007). Prudent sport industry managers and sport marketing professionals plan for the regaining, restoration, and improvement of their sport organization due to a significantly negative situation or event. Proper recovery marketing planning prepares sport organizations for the implementation and management of sport marketing efforts used to recuperate from negative scenarios, and can significantly reduce the financial, social, and image-based downfalls inherent to these adverse situations.

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