Community Relations Programming in Non-Traditional NHL Markets

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Abstract
In the past twenty years, USA Hockey participation figures have grown at exponential rates, with overall amateur participation numbers reaching the half-million mark for the first time in 2011 (USA Hockey, 2012). Much of the overall growth of hockey in the United States has occurred in what some may define as non-traditional markets. These non-traditional markets comprise of Southern, mid-Atlantic, and West Coast cities, and several of the expansion and relocation teams that have grown since the early 1990s. In order to understand the growth of the sport, it is first important to look into what community outreach programs have been implemented by the various teams in the region, to help comprehend the varying sorts of awareness initiatives available to the public. While there has been minor looks into the marketing initiatives implemented by teams around the years of their conception, further research into current programming has not been done. A thematic and exploratory search into these themes will set the basis for further research to help understand a correlation between community outreach theming and growth of participation figures in the varying regions.

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Community Relations Programming in Non-Traditional NHL Markets

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Abstract

In the past twenty years, USA Hockey participation figures have grown at exponential rates, with overall amateur participation numbers reaching the half-million mark for the first time in 2011 (USA Hockey, 2012). Much of the overall growth of hockey in the United States has occurred in what some may define as non-traditional markets. These non-traditional markets comprise of Southern, mid-Atlantic, and West Coast cities, and several of the expansion and relocation teams that have grown since the early 1990s. In order to understand the growth of the sport, it is first important to look into what community outreach programs have been implemented by the various teams in the region, to help comprehend the varying sorts of awareness initiatives available to the public. While there has been minor looks into the marketing initiatives implemented by teams around the years of their conception, further research into current programming has not been done. A thematic and exploratory search into these themes will set the basis for further research to help understand a correlation between community outreach theming and growth of participation figures in the varying regions.

Keywords: USA Hockey, community outreach, hockey, participation, Anaheim, Carolina
Community Relations Programming in Non-Traditional NHL Markets

For decades, USA Hockey has lived in the shadow of Hockey Canada in terms of sheer participation numbers, as well as in public opinion of hockey dominance (Gillis, 2012). It is no doubt that hockey is a byproduct of Canadian culture, however within the past twenty years, the sport of ice hockey has grown at an exponential rate across the United States, boasting numbers that are slowly closing in on Canadian hockey participation rates.

According to USA Hockey statistics, player participation numbers have broken the half-million mark for the first time in history following the 2011-2012 season (USA Hockey, 2013). Within this statistical set, one can see the overall growth occurring in regions including the Southeastern region (Alabama, Arkansas, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North and South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia), the Rocky Mountain region (Arizona, Colorado, Montana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Idaho, Texas, Utah, and Wyoming), as well as the Pacific region (Alaska, California, Nevada, Oregon, Washington, and Hawaii).

It can be inferred that traditional markets include cities with long subjected histories to the sport of hockey, namely in the Northeast, Michigan, and Minnkota regions, however the growth of hockey in both the Southern and Pacific regions help pose my research question; What themes exist in community relations programming for NHL teams in non-traditional markets. Since the conclusion of the 1990-91 season, the National Hockey League has expanded in size with the addition or relocation of eleven teams. Of these eleven franchises, nine modifications have been made within the United States; eight of which are located in what is considered a non-
traditional market. These cities include; Anaheim, San Jose, Tampa Bay and Sunrise Florida, Nashville, and relocation of existing NHL teams to Phoenix, Carolina, and Dallas. It is important to look at the marketing and various team initiatives each of these teams have made since their formation, and what community relations programming themes exist that could lead to future understanding of the growth in these regions.

**Literature Review**

In order to begin determining any specific data, it is first necessary to investigate what exactly justifies a city as being a non-traditional market. These cities generally have had little access to hockey prior to being awarded a professional team, yet have shown to have sufficient markets to sustain a professional organization. Potential for growth, financial backing of an expansion team, as well as the venue plans and proximity to other markets are all factors considered in statistical analysis for other sport leagues (Bruggink & Zamparelli, 1999). While an empirical model for the MLB to justify expansion, the model expands on research conducted by Ferguson and Jones on location and survival for expansion cities across the league.

As the case for most of these teams, most fans could not describe what an icing was, nor name each position on the ice. Currently, a majority of the aforementioned teams have experienced increasing successes both financially and in terms of attendance, and overall play on the ice. It is my main hopes in research to see just how these teams got to the point they have, and how their overall successes may contribute to the success of hockey participation and interest around their market.

This research may help to benefit marketers and team executives in minor league or small market cities develop a basis for fan identification, and in determining what sorts of community
outreach programs are worth investing their time and efforts. This research may also help set the tone for further research in growing sport participation and interest in other sports, not necessarily just hockey. Although a long way from being as prominent in the American sports culture as the NFL and MLB, the fan-base of the NHL is slowly but steadily growing in stature and strength.

**Attendance**

Much of the research existing today focuses on ticket sales across the NHL and what influences fans to attend games. Several studies have shown, both at the AHL (American Hockey League) and the NHL levels, that fighting and aggressive play is one of the biggest factors in attendance spikes (Hanson & Gauthier, 1989). Almost as important as late season playoff pushes, and conference rivalry games, fighting is more likely to increase attendance for the following game than a high scoring affair. Whether it is an escapist occurrence in which the spectators can take stress or anger out vicariously through the players fighting, or it triggers a primitive psychological state, most fans are positively responsive to violence (Paul, 2003).

Provenzano, in a 2010 study, looked at varying factors that modified attendance throughout the season for five NHL teams, two of which being the Anaheim Ducks and the Carolina Hurricanes (Provenzano, 2010). In compiling his statistics, Provenzano identified independent variables that could skew the results, such as time of season, division and rivalry games, and weekend games, and tested for each variable, while also looking at utilized capacity from arena to arena, not just a total attendance figure. In conclusion, the results attained by Provenzano show that traditional factors for attendance, such as fighting and aggressive play, is inconclusive (Provenzano, 2010).
While this research contradicts that of Paul, it could possibly help support a theory that community initiatives and promotional tactics implemented by the teams are not only important, but a key factor in drawing fans on a nightly basis. Acknowledging that there are variables such as fighting, which plays a role in fan attraction to the sport, I can account that there will be variables in attendance that may not be affected by any sort of community relations program.

Community Outreach

Implementing community outreach programs in efforts to reach prospective fans and athletes in the sport has been a common trend across different teams in these non-traditional markets. The Kings, Sharks, and Stars each own their own separate training facility or IcePlex, available for public use yet under the private funding of the franchise (Daley, 2000). While these three teams own the venues, the Panthers, Ducks, and Lightning work in accordance with local rinks to sponsor youth hockey teams and travel teams, in hopes of fueling travel hockey competition (McGourty, 2003).

In addition to the growth and presence of new facilities being built to allow ice time as well as roller hockey play, NHL teams such as the Los Angeles Kings, Phoenix Coyotes, Anaheim Ducks, and San Jose Sharks are hosting community events that teach young players the sport, while also providing them with equipment and a basic skill set necessary to compete. The Sharks & Parks program, established in 1991 by the San Jose Sharks, is the sheer basis for what has become of street hockey initiatives across the country.

In 1994 alone, a figure of participants reached 20,000 kids across Northern California, and continues to grow today (Corwin, 1994). Although it cannot be directly correlated, the Sharks enjoyed added success selling out the 1994 and 1995 seasons, while amassing the highest
retail revenue in all of American professional sports (Corwin, 1994). McGourty (2003) discussed how each team in the southern and non-traditional market has participated in youth-street hockey, which is funded by the NHL teams at no-cost to participants.

The warm climate in these regions allows for year-round participation in the sport, enabling youth street hockey programs to be implemented in what most northern or cold climate cities would see as non-plausible. The success of certain youth players in these regions, such as Emerson Etem, a byproduct of Long Beach, California are becoming more prominent as youth from the early 1990s are reaching adulthood (Gillis, 2012).

Likewise, the L.A. Kings offer hockey scholarships for underprivileged children that helps alleviate costs of ice time, equipment, and participation (McGourty, 2003). Previously discussed, the Anaheim Ducks perform charitable acts within the community as well as these “Learn to Skate” programs, including the S.C.O.R.E. program which travels to local schools reinforcing good character with hockey themed lessons (Anaheim Ducks Hockey Club LLC., 1998). These initiatives would fall under a community focused or community driven theme, as opposed to one that fosters growth of the sport of hockey or aiming at increasing attendance and spectatorship.

**Promotions**

Possibly the most important piece of information is a case study on the relocation of the former Hartford Whalers to Raleigh, North Carolina. The marketing efforts implemented by the Carolina Hurricanes’ staff included teaching fans about the sport of hockey and the long history of both the NHL and the former Hartford Whalers. They hoped to draw in fans through the sport of NASCAR, and purchased the rights to display their team logo on Jeff Burton’s car, whom
ultimately became a major spokesperson for the Hurricanes and hockey in general (Carter & Douglas & Hoffman & Kelley, 1999).

Doubling as a community initiative, the Hurricanes staff went out into the public to teach the rules of hockey, the structure of the league, hockey strategy, and the history of the game. These intrinsic values are part of Wann’s factors for identifying as part of a group (Luellen, Theodorakis & Wann, 2012). Brochures were passed out at home games and educational videos before and after games were created to develop a hockey community in Raleigh (Carter & Douglas & Hoffman & Kelley, 1999). Teaching the sport of hockey to members of the community falls into a growth and awareness theme. This tactic was altered after the sport was established in Carolina, and further discovering newer strategies will be necessary to better understand the lifecycle of promotional and community relations departments.

Like the Hurricanes, the Nashville Predators attempted to reach a new fan base through an already prominent and widespread country music demographic. Ticket packages and incentives were offered by the Predators which allowed fans to purchase suite tickets with country music artists and producers (Waddell, 1998). The tactic allowed music artists to promote their product, while allowing the Predators to introduce hockey to the community as well. Country music today is greatly integrated with their overall game presentation, featuring country songs in between whistles and during down time.

It is interesting to note that initial promotional tactics utilized by these NHL cities mirror that of minor league markets, particularly those of the American Hockey League (Chatt & Paul, 2011). The Hurricanes and Predators in particular created them nights and group ticket packages to cater to the interests of fans, in an effort to draw them in, rather display a product on the ice. In
terms of the other non-traditional teams, further research will conclude what sorts of initiatives and promotions were conducted in an effort to draw in and increase attendance.

**Psychology of Participation**

Studies have shown varying reasons to why individuals participate in sport. According to the British Psychological Society, factors for participation can vary between organized, high risk sports such as hockey, lacrosse, or football, and non-risk sports such as tennis, bowling, etc. The factors were conducted through a survey of high school students, which revealed reasoning such as having fun, the social aspect of sports, the physicality and competition, and improving skill level as the top reasons for participation in recreational or competitive sports (Lindner & Sit, 2006). This research is supported by Amentrout and Kamphoff in their 2011 study of hockey attrition in hockey players ages 12-14. Parents and players alike contribute reasons for departure from the sport to a lack of these listed categories in Lindner and Sit’s study.

Barber, Eccles, Jacobs, and Perkins (2004) studied the participation levels in sport of both adolescent and young adults who participated in sport at a young age. They concluded that individuals who participated at a young age were more likely to participate, and recreate positive participation than an individual not exposed to sport in childhood (Barber, Eccles, Jacobs, & Perkins, 2004). While no true research has been done to assess how these individuals introduce sport to offspring in a cyclical cycle of populating athletes or future participants, the study was important in understanding the behaviors of individuals as they age.

Through the study it can be established that based on factors such as gender, income, education levels, and family structure, an adult with access to sport and sport education (rules, guidelines) will generally follow the pipeline into adolescence and young adult hood, while
maintaining healthy lifetime fitness levels (Barber, Eccles, Jacobs, & Perkins, 2004). This research indirectly supports the concept of introducing community initiatives to youth participants in the effort to create stability in sport and in overall fandom.

Spectator Motivation and Fan Identification

To better understand attendance and fan identification in accordance to individual cases of community outreach programs, one has the possibility of understanding motives for participation in sport as well. Other areas of interest in helping to solve my question is the exact reasons for participation in sports, and the psychological benefits of being a fan of a particular sports team. Daniel Wann is a leading researcher in this field, and his study on causal relationships between team identification and well-being (2006), gives the basis for my understanding of fan behavior and attachment. While much of the research on fan identification and identification relating to psychological well-being has been established in the past, Daniel Wann has helped further existing research with studies delving into the psychology and inter/intra-personal relationships that exist in sport.

Wann (2006) concludes in his research that individuals with high levels of identification with a local team will lead to positive psychological health. This study can help to account for spikes in attendance following a successful year, while also indicating that individuals habitually become fans of professional teams in their city to belong and fulfill need of togetherness (Wann, 2006). Being around others with likeminded feelings of togetherness fulfills an enduring connection, benefitting group psychology (Gardner, Grieve, Martin, & Wann, 2008). In a later study conducted by Wann and Weaver (2009), it is revealed that fans with this high identification noticeably increase their self-esteem, while lowering levels of fatigue, anger, and confusion.
Whether it is the fact they have something to look towards after a long day, or a sense of connection with other fans in a similar city rooting for a common team, these individuals closely tied to the “group” are shown to have a better well-being in society versus outliers or non-identified fans.

Self-esteem also plays an important role in sports, as there are two categories for high identified sports fans; high self-esteem, and low self-esteem (Roberts, Tindall, & Wann, 1999). The authors describe high self-esteem fans are being more outgoing and vocal about their team, as well as having steady purchasing behaviors. Low self-esteem fans shy away from purchasing tickets in slumps or against rivals or in games there is threat of losing (Roberts, Tindall, & Wann, 2000). This is critical from a marketing standpoint in trying to understand how to spark interest in these fans to purchase tickets, which are the most crucial source of revenue in the NHL (Casper, Kanters, & James, 2009).

Later research following the footsteps of Wann, highlights the importance of media coverage in boosting community and fan interest (Andrew, Greenwell, Hardin, & Koo, 2009). With a small market team, and variables that may restrict attendance in play, coverage of a team may help to reach low-esteem or low identified fans and keep them engaged. A separate analysis of marketing in the NHL supports this belief of media coverage. Promoting a team and its traditions and history will help to establish a common culture for fans to identify with and will boost overall brand equity (Delpy-Neirotta, Johnson, Séguin, & Teed, 2009).

Potentially the most important takeaway in terms of understanding spectator motivation in sport, Wann and his colleagues determined eight motives that exist in sports that drive fans to attend games. These factors (escape, economic, eustress, self-esteem, group affiliation,
entertainment, family, aesthetics) “can be of significant benefit to the sport marketer looking to boost team revenues and gate receipts” (Grieve, Pease, Wann, & Zapalac, 2008). Fans are believed to use sport to escape from everyday life; work, college, stress at home, etc., which translates into eustress or positive stress associated with watching the event or being surrounded by individuals with common beliefs (group affiliation) (Grieve, Pease, Wann, & Zapalac, 2008).

While Casper, Kanters, and James list an economic factor as a constraint to attendance, this research concludes that economic factors such as betting or wagering is a motivation for fans looking for economic gain (Grieve, Pease, Wann, & Zapalac, 2008). The entertainment motive accompanies the overall experience at a sporting event, and helps give support to the early presentation tactics performed by the Mighty Ducks in the early 1990s. The Ducks initial presentation ideas are the basis for game presentation in much of hockey today, with the introduction of cheerleaders, a loveable mascot, and laser light shows to accompany upbeat music (Batchelor & Formentin, 2008).

A family motive allows for individuals to spend time together while consuming the sport product, while aesthetic motives appeal to fans based on the movements of movement, style, or execution of a play (Grieve, Pease, Wann, & Zapalac, 2008). Aesthetic motivation is the most intrapersonal form because it depends on what a spectator enjoys in the gameplay especially in hockey; form, goaltending style, one-timers, skating, or more.

Whatever the case, much of Wann’s research has led to the development of more motivations for how and why fans act, and interact with others. Because ticket receipts are the most important source of revenue in professional hockey (Casper, James, & Kanters, 2009), it is very important to understand why fans attend games and how to keep them coming back. For
non-traditional markets, attendance has always been an issue necessary of addressing, and it is
my hope to understand how attendance is potentially related to community initiatives and overall
participation in sport.

Methodology

While there are eight teams I initially focused my efforts on understanding community
relations and the overall growth, only two have significant initial research available which will
set a foundation for furthering my own research. The Carolina Hurricanes and Anaheim Ducks,
two teams who have enjoyed fiscal competitive successes over tenures in the National Hockey
League, will be the focal point of my research. Information produced on the ‘Mighty Ducks’
organization, relating to their various community initiatives such as the S.C.O.R.E. program,
(Anaheim Ducks Hockey Club LLC., 1998), helped to provide a basis for existing community
relations programming established within the Anaheim hockey community.

Research Tradition

The research would most follow that of an interpretivist research tradition due to the
nature of knowledge, or the means by which information is processed and analyzed. An
interpretivist style uses qualitative research and looks for why something happens, not
necessarily the exact truth. Because the feelings and emotions present cannot be measured
numerically, it is important to assess the different initiatives available and understand why these
programs are in place.

While I am looking at what community outreach programs exist in the given markets, and
their themes, it is important to take into consideration how the programs would appeal to
members of each community and thus become successful in growing the sport of hockey. The
information discovered will not find an ultimate truth, but help to better understand what is available to the public in terms of community outreach, and how this information relates to existing theories on participation and involvement. I will be grouping these themes into different sub-categories, which is discretionary to how I view the trends to occur, which follows this generalization that interpretivism carries out. The data I find cannot summarize hockey fans as a whole, but rather helps to create a cross-section of how a fan responds to local community outreach.

Qualitative data will benefit in describing the different types of programs or promotions that were run. There may be some initiatives in place that could fall under either category, so it is necessary to classify whether it is a promotion or a community event, or other. Quantitative data may be used as supplemental research after my categories for theming have been discovered, however the primary focus for my current research is through non-numerical categorization describing each theme. Using interpretivism is beneficial here as it focuses primarily on explanation through words as opposed to heavy numerical grouping and theming.

Conceptual Framework

With the increase in participation numbers across the country, it is noticeable that the sport of hockey is still growing within the United States, at a fairly rapid rate. This growth is very certain in the regions one would not expect hockey to foster any sort of development, primarily the south and the west coast. These regions could be defined as non-traditional markets. As a growing sport becomes increasingly popular, the strength of participation generally increases as well. Because of this growth, it is important to understand just how teams are reaching out to their fans and what factors are leading to the growth.
Prior research indicates that there are trends within the sport of hockey that are leading to the overwhelming appeal of the sport in previously untapped markets (Gillis, 2012). From case studies of NHL teams moving markets, it is plausible to understand how teams have marketed not only the sport, but their own team, to mirror the interests of the immediate demographics (Carter, Hoffman & Kelley, 1999). Through these case studies, and investigating the promotional activities of teams within these regions, it is also important to address the variables that exist that could alter or affect just how the growth of hockey in these markets was attained.

Community outreach programs exist in various facets of business and across multiple fields of work. In sports, most professional organizations incorporate their outreach programs into the heart of their communities in order to foster mutual growth for their brand as well as the sport, and as a way to give back through corporate social responsibility. This term will be a major component of the paper, and throughout my research process, to determine just how the community outreach in these particular markets incorporates their local market.

It is important to account for certain variables throughout the research process, such as prior successes of the teams (Carolina winning the Stanley Cup in the 2005-2006 season and a subsequent “hangover effect”), as well as the NHL lockout which ended the 2004-2005 season. Other variables could include the financial demographics of surrounding areas, or the spending power of these regions, which I will not have the resources to define in my research. Because of these variables, it is important to note that there are certain variables I must take into consideration moving forward, in regards to increases in participation and interest of hockey in these regions in certain time periods.
Theoretical Framework

This research closely aligns itself with a team identification framework. The research is addressing how and why fans associate themselves with a team, and how this association may reflect in participation of the sport itself. Much of Wann’s research indicates that there is a strong relationship with psychology and overall well-being and sport (Martin & Wann, 2011), as well as a trustworthiness of other individuals within a common identity (Polk & Wann, 2007). In theory, with research highlighting the reasons for why fans identify with local teams, it is to be inferred that community efforts and promotional activities will help to foster community ties, thus leading to future participation and identification.

Although I am not looking to test Wann’s theories on sport participation, I will be looking to see if there is a relationship between the two. Community programming aimed towards participation in sport, whether it be youth or adult participation, or programming geared towards attendance, may ultimately have a relationship with statistical figures of USA Hockey in these regions, or the different attendance figures of the Anaheim Ducks and Carolina Hurricanes organizations.

Design

Secondary data will be collected, gathering information from team databases that list the community relations initiatives, as well as brief descriptions about each program. These programs will help me compile different themes that exist between both Carolina and Anaheim, that help to appeal to Wann’s research and theories on fan and spectator motivation. This data will be a combination of qualitative and quantitative research, to see how many programs exist, and briefly explain the purpose of such a program.
Procedure

It is important to note how the variables will factor into the research process, and be taken into consideration while choosing an appropriate time period to examine community initiatives. Omitting the 2005-2006 season in which the Carolina Hurricanes won the Stanley Cup and forever entered hockey immortality, and subsequently the following 2006-2007 season helps to eliminate the hangover effect in which fans are more likely to jump onto a bandwagon following a team’s successes. It is important to analyze the two teams following the 2004-2005 lockout, as the sport of hockey was revolutionized and was completely altered into a faster, more skillful game.

After variables on championship years and playoff successes are taken into consideration, each initiative or program for the selected season will be compiled into a spread sheet, with each home game throughout the season being given a descriptive title for what exactly happened. This will be completed for both teams, and matched side by side in order to see similarities and differences, and just how both teams went about fulfilling a public outreach system.

Attendance will be omitted as the economic status of both regions will be different, and cannot be taken into consideration. A pilot test will be conducted in order to make sure that information will not be left out, and that there are no variables left without consideration. This test will help backup my research and provide a sufficient mode of data collection, with an additional five to ten individuals assessing my methods.
Analysis

Coding and Theming were significant in conducting this research as it allowed a breakdown of the information gathered from the team websites. As results were collected and input into a spreadsheet, I was able to group the data into sub-categories based on the type of programming each piece of data fell into. This provided a quantitative number as well as provided an understanding of the themes that emerged from the data.

Themes based on the intended demographics, as well as the overall engagement tactic (entertainment, informational, charity, etc.) that the team was trying to accomplish. The process utilized open and axial coding, which gave a brief understanding of the results, followed by a more thorough assessment after using axial coding to further polish the emergent themes.

Expected Results

Through this research I believe I will find that different themes exist in community outreach programs for organizations, particularly the two organizations. If there are no themes, it essentially means that teams have no marketing strategy or direction in which they are trying to go with their organization, and have little to do with the overall hockey landscape in their particular region. While it would require additional testing to determine if there is a correlation between programming and either attendance spikes or participation spikes, the themes could show the focus of the organizations and the direction they focus their spending on. These results could also show that there may be other psychological factors that get individuals to participate in sport, not relating to outreach programs. However, based on much of the findings by Wann and fellow colleagues, participation has a link to the connection to other fans and a long standing history of a local team, which could be related to these initiatives.
There are also implications to the field that I believe my research will set the foundation for. While showing that there are different categories or themes existing in community outreach programs, further testing can be done on a more regional scale, showing differences between each geographical region, according to USA Hockey. Also, the way hockey has grown in these southern and non-traditional markets mirrors that of Major League Lacrosse in the states of California, Texas, and Florida currently. Marketers and promoters of the sport of lacrosse may be able to use similar theming in their programming to match the past outreach programs implemented by organizations who were completely unfamiliar in the public eye.

Results

Results were gathered after investigating what different community relations programs and promotional activities were offered by NHL organizations in non-traditional markets; specifically the Carolina Hurricanes and the Anaheim Ducks. These two teams, located on different coasts, shared criteria worth noting in prior sections, including length of existence, Stanley Cup victories falling between both modern lockouts (Carolina 2005-2006, Anaheim 2006-2007), as well as exponential growth in participation numbers.

Information from this study shows what programs are being offered by each organization over a two year span, in terms of promotional and community activities and helps to draw conclusions as to what tactics are being used by each organization. Different themes emerged that help show what demographics are being targeted, as well as what each team is trying to accomplish with their promotional activity. Data gathered through archived publications on team websites help to highlight key similarities and differences in activity between the two teams.
The research study looked at 210 events occurring between the two organizations over a two year span; 56 related events hosted by the Anaheim Ducks, and 154 related events hosted by the Carolina Hurricanes. From this lump sum of raw data, codes were used to help develop themes in the programming hosted by each team, with notable themes emerging. Promotional codes included:

- Contest, Giveaway, Fan Involvement, Sponsor Alignment, Incentive, Player Involvement, Contest, Bar Party, Ticket Department, Appearance, Entertainment, and Networking.

Community Relations coding included:

- Grass Roots, Player Involvement, Community Awareness, Education, Charity, Social Responsibility, Health Awareness, Community Involvement, Networking, and Green Initiatives.

The codes emerged from the data and were used as a means to further break down or classify what exact events took place, and the overall incentive behind each event.

To better understand what codes were used and the times they occurred, refer to Table 1 and Table 2. The results in Table 1 shows community programming initiated by the Ducks organization in both the 2008 and 2009 calendar years. Table 2 shows the programming offered by the Hurricanes in the same time period.
Table 1:

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<th>Community Relations</th>
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<td>Grass Roots</td>
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It is important to note that in 2008, the Anaheim Ducks did not publish any press releases in regards to promotional activity. The extent of their outreach programming focused on community relations programs, with a significant amount of time devoted to charity programs as
well as overall Grassroots programming. This trend continued to 2009, in which we can see that promotional activities were published but still fell short in comparison to that of community relations initiatives. Again, grass roots programming and charity work dominated in sheer numbers.

The Carolina Hurricanes provided extensive data regarding their community outreach programs from 2008 to 2009, with a reverse trend from their counterpart, the Anaheim Ducks. Extensive efforts were placed into promotional activities, amassing over 50 events in 2008, and 63 in 2009, accounting for almost half the data alone. Bar Parties and viewing parties were common trends, showing a theme gearing towards the adult demographic, versus the youth perspective of Anaheim.

Grass roots and charity initiatives combined for the highest totals of community relations programming both years, mirroring that of Anaheim, and furthering the idea that there is some sort of effort in place to foster youth participation and interest within the sport organization.

Two trends emerged for both Carolina and Anaheim that must be taken into consideration when interpreting the data. Grass Roots programming and charity events occurred twice as much as any other community relations program for a combined total of 60 out of the 81 total community relations programs between both teams.

Whether it was educational purposes or hockey related, players were used as a focal point, through Q&A, skills training, or book reading. For Anaheim, player events occurred at each age demographic, ranging from learning to skate, to adult golf tournaments. Carolina, while investing in youth participation, found success in much of their adult programming including bar
parties, and other entertainment options such as partnering with Red Bull for concerts and extreme sport demos.

**Discussion**

The information provided by the research attempts to address underlying factors contributing to hockey growth in these non-traditional markets over the past twenty years. With California and the Mid-Atlantic being among the most rapid of markets for hockey growth, research was conducted in hopes of uncovering trends existing in these regions as to why hockey participation is occurring at such a rapid rate. While it is difficult to pin point an exact reason for such growth, gaining insight to team activity in the community is beneficial in understanding from a basic point what exactly teams are trying to do within their markets.

Prior research shows that traditional factors for attendance in both Carolina and Anaheim are inconclusive, hinting that there are other factors existing beyond the norm (scoring, fighting, aggressive play) that are motivating fans to attend games (Provenzano, 2010). While this study does not look at attendance factors, the 2010 study by Provenzano helps further thought that there is some phenomena occurring to bolster numbers of participation and interest in these regions that may not be visible in other locations. The results indicate that there is a significant amount of activity occurring off the ice to keep fans engaged and interested, which may ultimately compliment motivational factors discussed by Provenzano and Wann alike.

What can be concluded however is that regardless of location, East coast or West coast, Eastern Conference or Western Conference, both the Carolina Hurricanes and Anaheim Ducks have implemented numerous community programs and promotional activities within their respective communities. Both teams held their own street hockey tournaments and youth hockey
programming to cater to grass roots initiatives. The Hurricanes sponsorship of Raleigh Youth Hockey, and Anaheim’s extensive efforts to create affordable and readily available rink time and space show the overall commitment to youth hockey within their given region.

Discrepancies in data come from the lack of information provided by each organization in differing areas. Anaheim lacked significant promotional archived data, whereas Carolina lacked publishing their community information. This discrepancy negatively impacted the number of the results, and may have altered the themes discovered.

While variables were taken into consideration when determining what teams to look at, limitations in research emerged, such as the lack of programming published into the team archives, as well as how much information was provided for each event. Each team published press releases into separate categories that varied between each organization; a Street Hockey Fest for Carolina may have been labeled Community Outreach, whereas Anaheim may have labeled such an event as a Promotional event. In collecting the data, this proved difficult trying to gauge what keywords each organization decided to use to describe their events.

The research conducted simply looks at the community outreach programming available to the public through archived data, while neglecting to look at other variables or factors that could lead to growing USA Hockey figures. Market demographics, the economy, location to other available markets, further marketing efforts, cost of other available entertainment all may factor into the purchasing decisions, as well as the accessibility of hockey rinks in the market.

Using the information as a mere basis however, further research could piggy back and dig deeper into these programs, and uncover additional programs in place. Further research may also choose to analyze the emergence of markets in traditional cities, and compare the themes of the
growth in these cities in comparison to Anaheim, San Jose, Dallas, Florida, Tampa, Carolina, Nashville, and Phoenix.

The demographical information available to an organization is significant in determining what type of programming may be more plausible to that given team. Florida is known to have a large population of retirees, so it might make more sense to target adults as opposed to youth participants more so than a different market. Grass roots programming is key in all markets to teach those unfamiliar with the sport the basics, however the method in which this programming is conducted may differ.

Emerging sports in non-traditional markets have the potential to thrive or to struggle, and as a sport manager it is important to understand the potential reasons for why this happens. Further research may help to uncover additional economical reasoning and implications or thriving sport over time. While this study did not take into consideration the financial aspects of such thrive-ability, encompassing financial figures such as market worth and department spending may also prove important to the study and create a more thorough approach.
References


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