The Boston Bruins’ Use of Social Media to Engage Fans in Promotions

Samantha Rogan
St. John Fisher College

Follow this and additional works at: https://fisherpub.sjfc.edu/sport_undergrad

Part of the Sports Management Commons

How has open access to Fisher Digital Publications benefited you?

Recommended Citation

Please note that the Recommended Citation provides general citation information and may not be appropriate for your discipline. To receive help in creating a citation based on your discipline, please visit http://libguides.sjfc.edu/citations.

This document is posted at https://fisherpub.sjfc.edu/sport_undergrad/72 and is brought to you for free and open access by Fisher Digital Publications at St. John Fisher College. For more information, please contact fisherpub@sjfc.edu.
The Boston Bruins’ Use of Social Media to Engage Fans in Promotions

Abstract
The topic of my research paper is the Boston Bruins’ use of social media to engage fans in promotions. More specifically, my research question is how do professional hockey teams use social media sites, such as Twitter, to increase fan engagement with team promotions? This research is important because we learned more about how social media sites are utilized in a positive way and were able to see what it takes to make these social media sites successful at the professional sport level. Some findings that have already been conducted on this topic include the different types of promotions and involvement, fan motivation on social media sites, social media in professional hockey specifically, and NHL teams using social media sites. The methodology I used is an interpretivist research tradition, in which I utilized both qualitative and quantitative data. The qualitative data came from the tweets sent out by the Boston Bruins in regards to new promotions the team has to offer; while the quantitative data focused on the number of retweets, favorites, and comments that these promotional tweets received.

Document Type
Undergraduate Project

Professor's Name
Katharine Burakowski

Subject Categories
Sports Management

This undergraduate project is available at Fisher Digital Publications: https://fisherpub.sjfc.edu/sport_undergrad/72
The Boston Bruins’ Use of Social Media to Engage Fans in Promotions

Samantha Rogan

St. John Fisher College
The use of social media in professional hockey

Abstract

The topic of my research paper is the Boston Bruins’ use of social media to engage fans in promotions. More specifically, my research question is how do professional hockey teams use social media sites, such as Twitter, to increase fan engagement with team promotions? This research is important because we learned more about how social media sites are utilized in a positive way and were able to see what it takes to make these social media sites successful at the professional sport level. Some findings that have already been conducted on this topic include the different types of promotions and involvement, fan motivation on social media sites, social media in professional hockey specifically, and NHL teams using social media sites. The methodology I used is an interpretivist research tradition, in which I utilized both qualitative and quantitative data. The qualitative data came from the tweets sent out by the Boston Bruins in regards to new promotions the team has to offer; while the quantitative data focused on the number of retweets, favorites, and comments that these promotional tweets received.
The use of social media sites can help teams measure how effective promotions and audience engagement are (Jacques, 2011). If professional sport teams are able to identify and connect with their fans, they are more likely to gain positive feedback and attention, therefore enhancing the success of the organization as a whole. This research focused on the use of social media in professional hockey and how the Boston Bruins utilized Twitter to offer promotions to their fans. I researched the different strategies used by the Boston Bruins to utilize their social media sites and ensure that their fans are receiving new information regarding promotions in a fast and efficient way. This research benefits the academic community because we learned more about how social media sites are utilized in a positive way at the professional sport level and what it takes to make the use of these social networks successful. My research also benefits practitioners because the results of my research showed professionals what promotions received more positive fan feedback than others, as well as what approaches are the most effective in order to gain more fan attention.

Literature Review

Fan Engagement

There have been past articles from the *International Journal of Sport Communication*, including an interview with Pat Donahue, who is the digital media coordinator for the Los Angeles Kings. Mr. Donahue discussed the team’s ultimate goal of using social media sites such as Twitter, and the attention that the team received from fans and players in response to their tweets. He said the team’s main goal with their social media efforts is engagement. The team wanted the fans and the general public to be
actively engaged on Twitter by retweeting, favoriting, or commenting on the tweets they send out (Zimmerman, 2012). Another topic of research already conducted that relates to my research question is an overlook on “how the engagement of the public can change the organization’s strategy based on the reaction they receive from the public eye.” In other words, a sports team or organization may change their marketing and/or social media approaches based on the feedback they receive from fans (Varini & Sirsi, 2012, p. 33-46).

A study of professional sport organizations in the age of social media has also been conducted in the last few years. The blending of traditional marketing strategies, as well as the use of social media sites, can help create long-term relationships with the teams’ supporters (O’ & Shea, 2011, p. 196-212). This helped me with my research because it discussed the strategies used by professional sports teams to utilize their social media sites in order to receive the most fan feedback and interaction. An article from Sport Marketing Quarterly also focused on the topic of social media and sports marketing. The authors of this article explored the motives and constraints influencing Sport Twitter Consumption (STC). They focused on “creating a model that consists of four measures of motivation: information, entertainment, pass time, and fan ship” (Witkemper, Choong Hoon, & Waldburger, 2012, p. 170-183). This also relates to my topic because it described specific ways in which professional sports teams are willing to motivate their fans in order to become active via social media.

The New Roles & Impact of Social Media

The rise of social media has also had a strong impact on professional sports teams. These social media sites are used by both professional teams and their athletes to
interact with fans and gain feedback on what the fans are hoping to get from their favorite team or player (Crescenti & Kishner, 2010, p. 24-27). Other research that has already been done on this topic includes the positive and negative effects that the use of social media sites have on sports teams. The authors of an article from the *International Journal of Sport Communication* discussed how using this type of media source moderates team identification. If professional sport teams are able to identify and connect with their fans, they are more likely to gain positive feedback and attention, therefore enhancing the success of the organization as a whole. This relates to my topic because I observed what works and what does not work when it comes to the effectiveness of using social media sites within professional sport organizations (Dae, Yu, & Zimmerman, 2010, p. 402-422). An article from the *Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management* also discussed the new roles social media has taken on as technological advances continue to be made. Many professionals reflected on these new roles and discovered how they affect the sales process in sport (Andzulis, 2012, p. 305-316). This is related to my topic because the increase in ticket sales, for example, might be caused by the awareness of the promotions these organizations have to offer.

Every sports team must determine a specific approach for utilizing their social media sites, which will benefit the organization as a whole and how much revenue they generate overall. Honjung Wang has also conducted previous research to provide an overview of what public relations professionals do in order to enable successful communication with young consumers via social media sites. According to Wang, “the six P’s of social media include person, profile, perception, peer, post, and pull. He explained each of these six P’s and their importance to young consumers” (Wang, 2012,
The use of social media in professional hockey

This information will assist me with my research because it explained certain social media strategies that will attract a specific demographic, in this case, young kids and teenagers.

As I continued my research, my first step was to gather more information involving the specific promotions used by professional sports teams on game days. This can range anywhere from ticket promotions, in-game promotions, post-game autograph sessions, meet and greet with the players, etc. I needed to research information regarding the topic of promotions as a whole, as well as look up examples used by different professional sports teams. I then focused more specifically on professional hockey and the specific promotions those teams use for their organization. The ways in which these professional sports teams promote these ideas via social media sites will also be critical information to learn because it is related directly to my research question.

The likely sources of information for answering my research question will be the Boston Bruins’ Twitter account. This site explained what promotions the team is offering to their fans and showed the different approaches or strategies the team used to draw the most attention from their fan base.

**How Promotions Effect Attendance**

A study has previously been conducted to analyze the effects of specific promotion types on attendance at Major League Baseball games. A multiple regression analysis was performed by using both promotion type and relevant timing variables to determine when promotions will be the most successful at increasing attendance rates. The results showed promotions offered at night games in Major League Baseball had the greatest impact on attendance (Boyd & Krehbiel, 2006). Another study was conducted in
2007 to determine the effects of promotions on attendance in professional baseball. This study, however, categorized the promotions into price, non-price, and a combination of price and non-price. This means that some promotions still had a price on them, but at a discounted rate such as ticket prices. Non-price items might include free giveaways or the chance to participate in on-field promotions during the game. A combination of the two might be an individual ticket package that comes with a free merchandise item. The results showed a significant increase in attendance when any promotion was used on game nights (Browning & DeBolt, 2007). These two studies relate to my research because they showed the different types of effects the use of promotions can have on attendance rates at the professional baseball level.

Research has also already been done to determine what factors influenced attendance at professional sporting events. One article discussed the importance of consumer behavior research by professional sport organizations, focusing specifically on their primary objective of increasing fan attendance. The factors influencing fan motivation to attend certain games are key to developing organizational plans and strategies. The main focus of this study explained the effects on the desire of people to attend future sporting events (Lee & Bang, 2003). Another article related to sports participation and attendance covered a more broad description of the topic. The authors explained the determinants of sport participation and attendance in forty different sports. They categorized the two types of involvement as participation and attendance, and believed these are two very different topics when constrained by multiple variables (Lera-Lopez & Rapun-Garate, 2011, p. 167-169). For example, some people believed
participation in a sporting event includes watching every minute of the game and taking part in the in-game promotions. However, other people thought just attending the game itself is considered involvement at a sporting event. These articles also helped my research because they provided insight as to what fans are looking to take away from their favorite sports team or organization.

**Fan Motivation on Social Media Sites**

A study examining the social interaction and fan motivation for following professional athletes on Twitter has also been conducted within the last year. This article focused on what motivational factors caused fans to follow professional athletes on Twitter. The data showed followers of the social athlete were motivated by interpersonal reasons, while others were motivated by the amount of interaction the fans received from their favorite athlete (Frederick, Choong, Clavio, & Walsh, 2012). This is useful information in relation to my topic because it showed the different motivational factors that fans used to interact with professional athletes on social media sites. Another article from the *International Journal of Applied Sports Sciences* discussed the different web advertising opportunities professional sports teams have for their team web sites. Professional sports teams have the opportunity to use their team web site to attract attention from fans, sponsors, and other corporations. The use of team web sites can also increase awareness of new promotional ideas, or use links to direct the fans to the team’s social media sites (Yu & Barnd, 2003).

An article from the *International Journal of Sport Communication* compared how National Football League teams use their web sites and Facebook pages to engage their
The use of social media in professional hockey

fans. The research is directed towards how these cites create relationships with their fans through the use of public relations strategies (Waters, Burke, Jackson, & Buning, 2011). A second article focused on the importance of sport organizations forming positive relationships with their fan base. The elements of this relationship-building process focus on communication, interaction, and value. It is important to have open communication between the sport organization and their fans in order to create a positive relationship. Interaction between the team and the fans is also important because it makes the fans feel valued and more involved when they can interact directly with their favorite sports team. This research also described the interactions that occur through social media exchanges and the value of certain social media sites (Williams & Susan, 2010).

**Promotions Used in Professional Hockey**

An interview has been conducted with the Director of Media Relations for the Chicago Blackhawks, Brandon Faber. Faber discussed all aspects of his job, including covering all parts of public relations for the team’s hockey and business. He believed social media is a vital communication tool between the fans and the team. Faber also pointed out their trend towards a way of measuring promotions, audience engagement, and awareness through the use of social media sites (Jacques, 2011, p. 8-9). In other words, Mr. Faber strongly believed the use of social media sites can help his team measure how effective promotions and audience engagement is. Other research has also been conducted on the planning of in-game sponsored events and promotional activities in professional sports. Professional sports teams use promotions as a way to connect with fans and increase the overall value of the fan experience (McKee, 2009). This is important because it described how the use of promotional ideas and sponsored events
The use of social media in professional hockey can increase the overall fan experience at sporting events and keep them coming back for more.

A more recent study has explored the top five National Hockey League teams in social media dating back to May of 2012. The author analyzed NHL teams’ performance in four specific categories: presence, audience, engagement, and buzz (Track Social Blog, 2012). This research is important as it relates to my topic because the top five NHL teams discovered creative new ways to interact with their fans via social media sites and offer promotions based on their interaction with the organization through these web sites. An article from the National Hockey League web site discussed the variety of welcome back promotions certain teams were offering to their fans after the conclusion of the NHL lockout in January of 2013. Teams offered their fans giveaways and contests, free or discounted tickets, merchandise, parking and concession, as well as other promotions to welcome fans back for the first weekend of the new NHL season. The author also stated that many teams used their teams’ web sites and social media outlets to stage contests for fans throughout the season (Kreiser, 2013). This is directly related to my research question as it explains what NHL teams were willing to offer to their fans as a way of saying welcome back following the end of the lockout.

**Methodology**

As I continued my research, I focused more specifically on the promotions offered by the Boston Bruins on social media sites and the ways in which they spread the word to fans regarding these new promotional ideas. I then interpreted this information by further conducting my research to find out what approaches work best for these professional hockey teams in terms of using their social media sites to gain fan attention.
Lastly, I determined which approaches or strategies worked best for the Bruins, such as only offering promotions on game nights or offering promotions during both home and away games to ensure the fans are constantly engaged and interactive with the team.

**Research Tradition**

This research is in the interpretivist tradition. According to Gratton & Jones (2010), interpretivism is brought about while watching or managing sports as they are acted upon by a number of external social forces, but also have free will to respond to such forces in an active way, and are not inanimate objects, whose behavior can be understood in terms of casual relationships. The interpretative approach allows the researcher to gain an insider’s perspective by trying to understand the subjects from within. This research studied the tweets sent out by the Boston Bruins Twitter account in regards to promotions. Since this study looked at the words, statements, and other non-numerical data being used from the viewpoint of the participant, it fell into the interpretivist tradition because I interpreted the information to reach a conclusion.

**Theoretical Framework**

The information from my study goes along with the team identification framework. This framework stated that when a person has high team identification and satisfaction, there is a positive correlation between the amount of money fans are willing to spend on the team and the amount of time fans will invest in their favorite team (Matsuoka, Chelladurai, Harada, 2003). This applied to my research because the more fan engagement with the Boston Bruins on Twitter led to fans becoming more involved with the team as a whole. These fans took the time to read more about their favorite team including game and practice updates, press releases, promotional ideas, etc. If the fans are
more involved, they will be willing to purchase more for the team. For example, if a person saw a promotional tweet about a free t-shirt giveaway at the next home game, they might be more willing to spend money towards the team because in this case, the fan who wants a free t-shirt would need to purchase a ticket to the game, which would help the team increase attendance, as well as generate more revenue for the organization. The fans that have a strong attachment to the Boston Bruins organization can be reflected by their engagement and fan behavior on social media sites, in this case, on Twitter. This attachment and engagement is related to fan behavior because the fans that have a strong passion for the team are more willing to acknowledge certain tweets sent out by the team and will be more active in responding to the information sent out via Twitter.

**Conceptual Framework**

My research focused on the Twitter account activity for the Boston Bruins of the National Hockey League. I collected data for one month, starting on October 1st, 2013. The data included information from the tweets sent out by the team regarding promotions. Promotions are defined as any activity that supports or provides active encouragement to further a cause, venture, or aim (“Promotion”, 2013). The promotions used in the professional sports industry are designed to keep the fans actively engaged and provide a high level of entertainment for each person in attendance. The different categories of promotions I focused on included in-game promotions, giveaways, fan participation in the actual promotion itself, a chance to win free tickets, discounted ticket prices, food/beverage discounts, a chance to win a Bruins prize pack, and game day seat upgrades. The different concepts within this framework included connecting fans to the product, determining why fans should look at these tweets, and overall fan engagement.
In this study, connecting fans to the product is being done through the social media Twitter platform. The information sent out by the team regarding new and upcoming promotions was done in 140 characters or less to get the main point across to the fans. Fans should look at these tweets because it gave them the chance to develop a stronger attachment to the team, as well as heighten or increase their identity with the team. The overall concept of fan engagement is also important because fans who are actively engaged with their favorite team are more willing to respond to these tweets sent out about promotions, and are likely to become more involved with the team by participating and reacting to all of these promotional opportunities being offered by the Boston Bruins organization.

**Design**

My design involved collecting secondary data over a one month time period. It included a mixture of both qualitative and quantitative data. The qualitative data looked at the actual words or statements in the tweets I observed, while the quantitative data kept track of the number of retweets, favorites, and comments that each tweet received in regards to promotions being offered to the fans by the Boston Bruins hockey club.

**Procedure**

The data I collected from the Boston Bruins Twitter account will be secondary selective data because I focused on only the tweets regarding promotions. This data was easy to collect because I had access to any NHL team’s Twitter account, as each account is set to public rather than private. My sample size included information from all of the promotional tweets sent out during the entire month of October. These promotional tweets included the different categories of promotions that the Bruins organization was
willing to offer. I conducted a content analysis of the different categories of promotions that this NHL team is willing to offer to their fans. These types of categories included in-game promotions, such as giveaways or fan participation during the actual promotion, discounted ticket prices, or food and beverage discounts. I also kept track of the number of retweets, favorites, and comments that these promotional tweets received. By conducting a content analysis within my study, I was able to determine the presence, meanings and relationships of certain words or concepts within the text (Gratton & Jones, 2010). In this case, I observed the words and statements used in each tweet sent out by the Bruins in regards to promotions.

After analyzing this additional data collected from the tweets, I was able to draw conclusions based on which promotional ideas received the most fan feedback and the extent to how positive this feedback was. For my pilot test, I used a large excel spreadsheet consisting of all my data to keep track of the promotional tweets sent out by the Bruins each day throughout the month of October, and recorded the amount of retweets, favorites, and comments that each promotional tweet received. All data was recorded one week after each promotional tweet was posted to ensure the fan feedback was accurate and well received. Then I can ask five or six people to observe the same NHL Twitter account I looked at for two or three days to see if they end up collecting the data in the same way I have.

**Results**

The primary purpose of this study was to examine the use of social media in professional hockey to increase fan engagement with team promotions. The sample came from the Twitter account of the Boston Bruins of the National Hockey League and was
collected for one month, starting on October 1st, 2013. The data focused specifically on the tweets that the team sent out regarding promotions. The types of promotions that were observed were narrowed down into different categories, including giveaways, fan participation in the actual promotion, a chance to win free tickets, discounted ticket prices, food and beverage discounts, a chance to win a Bruins prize pack, or a game day seat upgrade. Each day throughout the month of October, the data was recorded based on what promotion was being offered by the Boston Bruins and how much fan feedback or engagement the team received. The fan engagement was recorded based on the number of retweets, favorites, and comments each promotional tweet received.

The results show that the most popular promotion offered by the Boston Bruins was a chance to win free tickets. This promotion was offered nine times throughout the month of October. The first time the Bruins offered this promotion was the day before the team’s home opener. Those fans that were willing to attend the JetBlue Bruins takeoff rally had their names entered into a drawing for a chance to win free tickets to the Bruins’ away game in Florida on October 17th. There were two separate days in which the team encouraged fans to purchase a raffle ticket at the next Bruins home game to have a chance to win free tickets to a future game. These two tweets specifically were sent out the day before their next home game. This shows that the organization wanted to encourage fans to purchase raffle tickets at the game they were already attending so that they could have a chance to come back and receive free tickets to the next game they attend.

The Bruins also used a unique approach two different times throughout the month to offer fans a chance to win additional free tickets. They sent out tweets telling their fans
The use of social media in professional hockey

to download the Bruins app on their smart phones and head to the ‘promotions’ page to enter their names for a chance to win free tickets and ride on the zamboni in between periods. This was a very creative way to spread awareness for this specific promotion because it gives the fans a chance to win tickets for free and encourages them to download the team’s app on their smart phone, which further connects them to the organization as a whole.

Another way the team used social media to spread awareness about the free ticket promotion was by creating the ‘Bruins Wild Side’ contest. The team sent out tweets telling fans to tweet pictures of them dressed up in Bruins gear or merchandise and use the Bruins Twitter handle @NHLBruins. The organization would then choose the best three pictures they saw and announce the winners by the end of the day. This is another creative way for the Bruins to increase fan engagement and reward the fans for participating in the contest.

Lastly, the Bruins also offered another chance to win free tickets by encouraging fans to tweet pictures of their best ‘Boston Bruins’ jack-o-lantern. The fans that submitted the best jack-o-lantern pictures would receive free tickets to a future Bruins home game. The team sent out these promotional tweets during the three days leading up to Halloween. This shows the organization’s willingness to keep the fans engaged and interactive by creating a contest tailored to an upcoming holiday.

Overall, the chance to win free tickets received the most fan feedback when tweets were sent out on October 9th; telling fans to purchase raffle tickets for a chance to win. This tweet received 22 retweets, 25 favorites and 10 comments, all of which had positive things to say about the promotion. This was also the only day that the team
offered an additional promotion on the same night. Fans who were willing to purchase tickets for the Bruins home game on October 9th would be able to receive food and beverage discounts to use during that game as well. The tweet regarding the food and beverage discount received 12 retweets, 21 favorites and 7 comments about specific questions, such as where to receive these discounts or what concession stands to go to. This shows that when the team offered multiple promotions via their Twitter account, the fans were quick to take notice and respond by retweeting, favoriting, and commenting on these tweets.

Other promotions that the Boston Bruins only offered once to their fans through their Twitter account were a chance to win a Bruins prize pack, a game day seat upgrade on October 5th, discounted tickets to the Bruins home game on October 14th, and a ‘Hockey Fights Cancer’ promotional night. Fans who attended the aforementioned JetBlue Bruins takeoff rally could also enter their name for a chance to win a Bruins prize pack. This included Bruins merchandise such as t-shirts, hats, rally towels, foam fingers, etc. The game day seat upgrade was offered to fans during the Bruins home game versus new division rival, the Detroit Red Wings. The team sent out a tweet saying the first two fans to find the Bruins Ice Girls located outside of section 319 would be able to have their seats upgraded for that game. The tweet was sent out prior to the start of the first period, giving fans the opportunity to find the girls and have their seat upgraded for the entire game. The discounted ticket prices were only offered one time during the month of October, again playing against the Detroit Red Wings. The team used these two specific home dates to encourage fans to attend and help promote the Bruins’ new divisional foe after the realignment of the National Hockey League divisions over the summer.
The Boston Bruins also hosted their ‘Hockey Fights Cancer’ promotional night on October 24th versus San Jose. This night was designated for the Bruins to show their support for cancer research in numerous ways throughout the game. The Bruins management, coaches, and other employees all wore the color purple, which is the color chosen to support pancreatic cancer. The players used lavender colored tape on their sticks and wore purple decal stickers on their helmets during the game. The team also sent out tweets encouraging fans to show their support and wear purple to this specific game. Pediatric cancer patients at local Boston hospitals were invited to the game and had the opportunity to greet the team as they headed out onto the ice from the locker room. Boston Bruins forward Patrice Bergeron also hosted a group of pediatric cancer patients by purchasing tickets for them to watch the game from one of the luxury suites. This promotional night shows the Bruins willingness to show their support and participate in a league-wide initiative during the ‘Hockey Fights Cancer’ month.

Overall, the Boston Bruins organization sent out tweets offering promotions to their fans on 12 out of 31 days throughout the month of October. Five of these promotions were offered the day before a home game, while three of them were offered on home game days. Three promotions were offered to fans within 2-3 days of a home game, while only one promotion was offered on an away game day. Of the 19 days where there were no tweets sent out offering promotions to their fans, 11 of these days were practice days, 4 of these were on home game days, and 4 of these were on away game days. This shows that the Bruins were willing to use their Twitter account to offer promotions to their fans mostly on the day before home games, or the days leading up to a home game. This is directly connected with the amount of fan engagement the team
received from these tweets, as the majority of the retweets, favorites, and comments came from the promotional tweets sent out the day before a home game or the 2-3 days leading up to a home game. The longest span of not having any tweets sent out about promotions was 11 days, with 1 home game and 3 away games occurring in that time period.

**Discussion**

The results of this study showed that the Boston Bruin’s giving the fans a chance to win free tickets to a future Bruins home game was the promotion that received the most fan engagement and positive feedback. The Bruins offered this promotion through the use of their Twitter account on nine separate days throughout the month of October. This promotion was offered in many different ways, such as attending the team’s takeoff rally before their first home game, buying raffle tickets to have their name put into a drawing for a chance to win free tickets, encouraging fans to download the Bruin’s app on their smart phones, entering into the Bruins’ ‘wild side’ contest, or submitting pictures on Twitter of their Bruins-themed jack-o-lanterns. These results show that fans became more involved or more engaged when they realized they had a chance to win something for free. This promotion also benefits the Boston Bruins organization as a whole because by giving certain fans free tickets, this will help increase their attendance, as well as help to generate more overall revenue from the additional purchased concessions and merchandise items. This relates to previous research because Browning & DeBolt’s study (2007) showed that non-price items, such as free tickets, showed a significant increase in attendance when this promotion was offered on a game night.

The results of this study also support previous research in illustrating topics such as fan motivation on social media sites, the impact of social media, and how promotions
used in professional hockey can reflect fan identity. Fans are more motivated to interact on social media sites if they are able to form a positive relationship with their favorite sports teams (Williams & Susan, 2010). This became evident after conducting this study because the Boston Bruins were willing to offer something to their fans through the use of social media, giving the fans a positive reason to interact with the team, therefore motivating them to respond to these promotional tweets by either retweeting, favoriting, or commenting on them. The Bruins were able to create a positive relationship with the fans by giving them many different opportunities to connect with the team.

This study also ties into previous research conducted on the rise of social media and the strong impact it has on professional sports teams. The teams that are able to connect and identify with their fans on social media are more likely to gain positive feedback and attention for the organization as a whole (Dae, Yu, & Zimmerman, 2010). The Boston Bruins were willing to interact with their fans on social media by offering them promotions that would give them a chance to further bond with the team. This leads into how promotions used in professional hockey can reflect fan identity. Professional sports teams often use promotions as a way to connect with the fans and increase the overall fan experience (McKee, 2009). This study showed that fans that interact with the Bruins team on social media could further attach to the organization by entering their names into contests or having the chance to win free Bruins merchandise. The Bruins were also able to increase the overall fan experience with their game day seat upgrade promotion. This gave the fans a chance to watch the game live in high quality seats that they most likely were not expecting to sit in. This creates an element of surprise and gives the winning fans an additional memorable experience.
The use of social media in professional hockey

The limitation of this study included only collecting data for a one month time period. This meant I could only see what promotions the Boston Bruins were willing to offer to their fans for the first month of the season, rather than for the first quarter or even the first half of the new season. This study was limited to the promotional tweets sent out by the Bruins’ organization through the month of October only, therefore I wasn’t able to determine if additional or different promotions were offered to fans during the second month of the season. If I could conduct this study again, I would’ve collected data from the Bruins’ Twitter account for a month during their playoff run last spring, thus being able to determine if the promotional tweets the team sent out differed between the playoffs and the regular season.

Based on the current findings, further research should focus on how successful certain promotions are when offered through social media sites and how specific strategies are developed within an organization to create new promotional ideas. If some promotions offered to fans receive more feedback and positive attention on social media sites, it must be determined whether or not those promotions should be offered more often than others. There also needs to be a specific individual who determines what promotions should be offered the most and how to spread these out throughout the course of the season. This would include limitations such as how long of a time period would we measure the success of these promotions and what variables would we have access to in order to measure success. The strategies developed by each team to create promotional ideas should focus on brainstorming promotions that may seem new to the fans or are not seen very often throughout the National Hockey League. This could help create a more valuable experience for the fans if they are able to see or participate in a promotion that is
not as common among different teams. Further research could also focus on the planning process for creating these promotional ideas and what strategies are used in this process to help ensure overall success for the organization. This would also include limitations such as how often this planning process occurs within each team in the National Hockey League, as well as how much access would we have to the people involved in this process. The types of data that would be most successful in getting at the answers to these questions would be qualitative data regarding the planning process for NHL teams and their promotional ideas. This data could be obtained by directly contacting certain members of the team’s front office staff to ask questions about their planning process and team promotions, or by conducting research on the team’s website.

**Conclusion**

Research findings show that the Boston Bruins organization were willing to offer promotions through the use of social media accounts to further connect and increase involvement with their fans. The Bruins offered their fans a chance to win free tickets to a future home game nine different times throughout the month of October. Coincidentally, this promotion received the most fan attention and positive feedback. This study relates to previous research that has already been conducted within the topics of fan engagement, fan motivation on social media sites, the impact of social media on the professional sport industry, how promotions effect attendance, and how promotions used in professional hockey can help reflect fan identity with their favorite team. Further research should be conducted to determine how successful a promotional night was to an organization and the different strategies that teams use to develop and create new
The use of social media in professional hockey

promotional ideas, which in turn, could lead to further fan engagement and involvement with the team.
References


Goss, B.D. (2009). Taking the ballgame out to the world: An analysis of the world baseball classic as a global branding promotional strategy for major league baseball. *Journal of Sport Administration and Supervision, 1*(1), 75-96.


The use of social media in professional hockey


Matsuoka, Hirotaka; Chelladurai, Packianathan; Munehiko, Harada (2003). Direct and interaction effects of team identification and satisfaction on intention to attend game days. Sport Marketing Quarterly, 12(4), 244-253.


http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/Promotion


The use of social media in professional hockey


