

Creating Consistency:

The Strengthening of Cal Poly Football's Brand to Improve Its Fan Base

A Senior Project

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Abstract

Collegiate football is the preeminent sport at most universities and is closely observed by a very dedicated and consistent fan base. At California Polytechnic State University San Luis Obispo, the football program has a very minimal following compared to other Division 1 (both BCS and FCS) schools. Since a strong and passionate fan base is absolutely crucial to maintaining consistently high game day attendance rates, Cal Poly immediately needs to explore avenues to reach out to its publics. This study observes how Cal Poly's football program could increase attendance and build consistency in their fan base by implementing a proactive branding plan.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Statement of the Problem

This study will examine how the Cal Poly Football team can strengthen their brand to increase attendance and build a consistent fan base. “Sports organizations are focusing on long-term consumer retention and incorporating a variety of database-management techniques to maintain and enhance customer relationships” (Bee, C. C., & Kahie, L. R., 2006, P. 102). Fans are the heart and soul of an athletic program.

This particular study will demonstrate the following: If the California Polytechnic State University’s Football program implements the proper techniques to strengthen their brand and build lasting relationships with their publics, they will see an increase in attendance and a consistency in their fan base.

Background of the Problem

“The strong symbolic power of sport is nowhere more evident than in the college setting” (Heere, B., Walker, M., Yoshida, M., Yong, J. K., Jeremy, S. J., & Jeffrey, D. J. (2011). Pg 410). College sports, specifically college football, have a cult following, and a driving force of why many students choose to attend certain colleges. At most universities, college football is the preeminent sport, and is closely observed by a very dedicated and consistent fan base. Unfortunately, at California Polytechnic State University San Luis Obispo, the football program has a very minimal following compared to other Division 1 (both BCS and FCS) schools. Since

a strong and passionate fan base is absolutely crucial to maintaining consistently high game day attendance rates, Cal Poly immediately needs to explore avenues to reach out to students, alumni, and the community to become actively involved with the Cal Poly Football program.

Purpose of the Study

By studying how to best brand Cal Poly and researching which tools and outlets to use, the Cal Poly Football team could not only be able to greatly expand their fan base, but create consistent fans who come out to every game.

Setting for the Study

This study will be completed at California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo as a Senior Project.

The data collection method for this study will be interviews with experts in their respective field. These experts include two leaders of Greek Life at their particular universities, a Social Media director in the most historic athletic department in the country, the Founder of the John R. Wooden Classic Basketball tournament, and one of the most accomplished sports public relations executives.

These experts will be asked various questions designed to explore the ways in which a football brand is built. The experience and knowledge of their areas of expertise will provide an inside look as to how some of the greatest programs and events have branded their teams, and what Cal Poly can do to not only emulate them, but improve what they do.

Research Questions

The following research questions were created to demonstrate and explore how brand strength is developed, how fans come to identify with a team, and why they stay faithful to said team.

1. How does a strong brand improve a sports team?
2. How does a fan come to form team identification?
3. How does social media play a part in branding a collegiate sport?
4. How could the Greek community become a significant public of the Cal Poly Football team?
5. How do you build a relationship with the stakeholders and publics of an athletic program?
6. How can the athletic department work in concert with the university's administration and alumni association to collaborate in branding the university and the football team?

Definition of Terms

Brand: The process of building corporate and product identities and differentiating them from those of the competition. (Guth, D., & Marsh, C., 2012)

Social Identity Theory: Social identity is that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from knowledge of his membership of a social group together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership (Heere, B. et al., 2011, p. 408).

Two-way communication: Two-way process of reaching mutual understanding, in

which participants not only exchange (encode-decode) information, news, ideas and feelings but also create and share meaning.

(<http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/communication.html>)

Brand loyalty: When consumers become committed to your brand and make repeat purchases over time. Brand loyalty is a result of consumer behavior and is affected by a person's preferences. Loyal customers will consistently purchase products from their preferred brands, regardless of convenience or price.

(<http://www.investopedia.com/terms/b/brand-loyalty.asp>)

Team identification: The personal commitment and emotional involvement customers have with a sport [team]" (Sutton et al., 1997, p. 15).

Social media: Online technologies and practices that allow people to share information and opinions. They can take many forms, including text, images, audio, and video. Social media include blogs, wikis, online social networks, and more.

(Guth, D., & Marsh, C., 2012)

User Generated Content: Short for user-generated content, UGC is the term used to describe any form of content such as video, blogs, discussion form posts, digital images, audio files, and other forms of media that was created by consumers or end-users of an online system or service and is publically available to others consumers and end-users. Also called consumer generated content.

(<http://www.webopedia.com/TERM/U/UGC.html>)

Greek life: The word fraternity is derived from the Latin word *frater* or brother. A fraternity is a group of men or women bound together by various ties that include brotherhood or sisterhood, friendship and common goals and desires. Women's

fraternities are generally referred to as sororities, from the Latin word for sister. Members of these organizations share their friendship, loyalty and knowledge and devote their efforts to the common goals of the organization. The combined efforts and talents of these individuals make the organizations strong. Their common experience helps build ties that will carry over into life after college and provide a resource base to draw strength from in their daily lives. Additionally, experiences in the fraternity or sorority helps develop a strong and creative mind and leadership style that can lead to future success.

(http://www.gcsu.edu/studentlife/what_is_a_fraternity_or_sorority.htm)

Stakeholder: A public that has an interest in an organization or in an issue potentially involving that organization. (Guth, D., & Marsh, C., 2012)

Public: In a public relations context, any group of people who share a common interest, value, or values in a particular situation. (Guth, D., & Marsh, C. 2012). *Public Relations A Values-Driven Approach*. Boston, MA. Pearson.)

Tailgating: Host or attend a social gathering at which an informal meal is served from the back of a parked vehicle, typically in the parking lot of a sports stadium. (http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/american_english/tailgate)

Organization of the Study

The organization of the study will be as follows: Chapter 1 includes a statement of the problem, background of the problem, the purpose, setting, and organization of the study, as well as definition of terms that will be helpful to the reader, and a list of research questions that the study will focus on. Chapter 2 will review the current literature regarding the use of branding in football and team

identification. Chapter 3 will outline the methodology of the study. Chapter 4 will summarize the findings from the respondent interviews and literature review. Finally, Chapter 5 will focus on my interpretations of the findings and my recommendations for the Cal Poly Football program to strengthen their brand and increase their fan base.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Impact of strengthening of brand for sports teams

According to Hardy, Norman, and Sceery (2012), branding is the most popular tool used in the sports industry today. Areas of branding can include tradition, personalities, on-field success, schedule, location, and media distribution. This tool, however, is not a new concept. Sports branding was used back in the Roman era during gladiatorial contests. The athletes were branded based on their weapon of choice, their training, and their stage name and personality. It is very clear how we can see this concept of branding athletes and teams transcend generations into today's sports industry.

"Sports are a product to be bought and sold" Hardy et al. (2012) concluded (p. 485). Brand improves a sports team by creating a consistent following of fans that are dedicated to the product and have brand loyalty.

Back when the sport of football was first being developed in the 1880's and 1900's, Michael Oriad (2007), a football-branding historian, stated how the New York daily newspapers were the ones that created the sport and transformed it into something recognized by everyone nationwide. "The overwhelming majority of football's emerging audience discovered football not from the grandstand, but from the daily press (Oriard, 2007, p. 62)." The newspapers were branding the sport, and consequently, fans emerged.

The branding of a sport draws fans, but also creates tradition and legacy. A former president of the University of Michigan has been quoted as saying, "Nine of

10 people don't understand what you are saying when you talk about research universities. But you say 'Michigan' and they understand those striped helmets running under the banner." (Hardy, S. et al., 2012, p. 495). The University of Michigan has one of the most prominent football programs in the country. Their brand is recognizable throughout the nation. This is the level that the Cal Poly Football program should want to aspire to. California Polytechnic State University is well known as one of the most prestigious academic schools in the country. Since football is the most widely watched collegiate sport in the NCAA, our football team's brand should match the prominence of the university's academic reputation.

In 1994, the National Football League hired Sara Levinson, former co-president of MTV as the new president of NFL Properties. With her hiring, Levinson ensured that the NFL would now become a strong brand, and professional football would become a major product marketed to the public. Levinson established a brand audit in which she identified three main groups to target in her strategic plan to increase brand awareness: hard-core fans, women and children, and casual fans. Because of her new focus on branding the NFL and targeting specific groups, the NFL experienced exponential increases in viewership and brand loyalty from each subgroup targeted (Oriard, M., 2007, p. 175).

From observing the branding used by the University of Michigan and the NFL, it is clear that at the core of developing a brand is creating fan development and consistency (Oriard, M., 2007, p. 185). We can safely assume that a strong brand for a sports team will attract fans. Football as a game itself cannot hold fans;

football programs with strong brands develop brand loyalty and therefore dedicated fans.

Building Team Identification

Team identification is what builds the strong foundation for a consistent fan base. A theory that focuses on increasing the longevity and strength of a fan's relationship to a team or organization can be found in the Social Identity Theory. "Social identity is that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from knowledge of his membership of a social group together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership" (Heere, B. et al., 2011, p. 408).

This theory focuses on the idea that one has not only a self-identity, but a group identity as well, which can encompass multiple classifications including demographics or membership organizations. Athletic teams would fall into the membership organizations category. It is imperative that athletic teams, especially collegiate programs, be aware of this idea. A collegiate athletic program has the capability of being a symbol of a university, which in turn could have a positive effect on the strength of the fan base (Heere, B. et al., 2011). "Sharing the values and sense of mission as a student with the university is closely related to the ability to connect and identify with the institution's football team" (Mark, P. P., Stinson, J., & Patton, E., 2010, p. 74).

With the use of this theory, the fan comes to form a social identity involving their team of choice by way of two items: affinity and affiliation. While these two words may seem extremely similar, these two processes work together to determine a social identity for a fan. A person will develop a sense of affinity with a

brand whose “images and personality are congruent with their own sense of self” (Mark, P. P. et al., 2010, p. 68). In addition to this process, affiliation occurs when “consumers believe an organization ‘emulates’ or shares similar principles or values to their own” (Mark, P. P. et al., 2010, p. 68). When affinity and affiliation are combined in this dual-carriage way model (See Figure 1), a person will develop a desire to make a connection, which will prompt team identification. In turn, this identification will boost game day attendance.

Social media’s influence in branding a collegiate sport

From the creation of social media less than a decade ago, it has infiltrated almost every facet of the entertainment culture, including collegiate sports. “From the creation of Facebook in 2004 and Twitter in 2006 to the present, social media has provided new ways for individuals, athletes, coaches and schools to communicate and share information. Coaches can use Twitter to connect with fans, impress recruits and promote their programs” (Clavero, G., 2011, p. 309). While collegiate athletic programs have budget constraints, and the traditional forms of media have diminishing viewership, social media provides an outlet for teams to develop a relatively inexpensive, personal relationship with their fans. (Clavero, G., 2011). Mississippi State University’s Athletic Director, Scott Stricklin, makes an excellent point about social media usage among collegiate sport teams. “It’s hard to miss Twitter and Facebook as communication tools in this day in age, and I think if you’re not in spaces where a large number of people are you’re really missing out on an opportunity to interact and to have that instant communication” (Clavero, G., 2011, p. 309).

Fans of sporting teams are usually more invested in the personal relationship that they have with the organization they follow than the average consumer; therefore they want to use User Generated Content (UGC) to be able to broadcast their feelings and thoughts throughout their social network. In addition to the fans posting their opinions via social media, the team should be using various forms of social media to strengthen their brand and promote two-way communication with their fans. When this interactivity is established with their followers, fan engagement should increase (Pronschinske, M., Mark, D. G., & Walker, M., 2012).

Posts from teams on social media should be focused on two main areas: content-based inquiry and audience-based inquiry. "Content-based inquiry focuses primarily on the messages generated by teams, athletes, and opinion drivers, such as sport media. Audience-based scholarly inquiry into sport and social media has tended to focus on the characteristics, demographics, uses, gratifications, and factors influencing consumption of and interaction with social media" (Clavero, G., 2011, p. 311). Both of these methods of posting, presenting facts or creating a conversation, should be utilized to obtain optimum relations with a team's fan base.

In addition to using tools like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, YouTube is an outlet that should be utilized more frequently as a public relations tool. YouTube is the second most popular social media behind Facebook. Collegiate athletic programs should increase their use of YouTube for a multitude of reasons. YouTube is a universally known outlet, and it is very easy to use. It also provides an easy platform to upload video instead of natively hosting it. YouTube's embedding qualities make it easy to share videos on a multitude of platforms including other

forms of social media and even other web pages, including university's athletic department websites. By doing this, teams can keep fans watching videos on the specific pages they choose, rather than redirecting them away from an organization's page (Clavero, G., 2011).

By using various forms of social media, college athletic departments could significantly promote and strengthen their team's brand and increase fan base, both online and game-day attendance.

Building a relationship between the Greek community and the Cal Poly Football team

The various communities within a university are all publics of the athletic program. Relationships with these publics need to be fostered and constantly maintained. It has been stated that the communities of the university "are possible points of attachment in the formation of team identity...while the football team is a formal subsystem of the university's athletic department, it is also part of the larger university structure" (Heere, B. et al., 2011, p. 411). When these communities have a relationship with an athletic team, they begin to identify with that team. In particular, the Greek community at any university is an extremely large public that can be an asset to an athletic program, and specifically the football team.

After much study of previous research, I have noticed that Greek relations is an area that has not really been explored. I plan on investigating this further with my interviews. I hope to come up with a strategic plan to improve the relationship between the Greek community and the Cal Poly Football team.

Developing relationships with the stakeholders and publics of an athletic program

“The fan is not merely a passive spectator. He (sic) is...a vital component in the proper functioning of the institution of sport” (Edwards H., 1973, p. 23). College athletics would cease to exist without avid supporters. Because of this, building relationships with stakeholders and publics of the athletic program is absolutely necessary.

Using social media is an excellent way to continually communicate with fans 24-7. By posting information to the team’s social media pages, as well as conversation starters, the fans will feel engaged with the program. “Given the reported findings, this exchange relationship is not only important, but necessary to increase Facebook fan numbers” (Pronschinske, M. et al., 2012, p. 229). Some other ideas for keeping the fans engaged with the program would be asking fans to upload photos of themselves at the games and other in-game promotions focused around social media (Pronschinske, M. et al., 2012).

Tailgating is another way to build relationships with stakeholders and publics of an athletic program. Tailgating is an interactive effort where stronger bonds are built, both with the program and other fans. Social interaction is one of the main reasons why fans attend sporting events, and also why they participate in the tailgating atmosphere. Another reason that tailgaters continually return for games every season is because they are motivated by the past and the future of the program. This means that tailgaters are reliving their experiences in college, while also looking to the future of creating new memories with friends and family, as well

as seeing the university they support prosper (Drenten, J., Cara, O. P., Leigh, T., & Candice, R. H., 2012).

There are multiple ways to market these ideas of tailgating to the fans. Initially, the athletic department could integrate items of both the past and the future to reach out to fans. A specific way to do this would be for fans to receive text messages with program history while at the tailgate. Because tailgating allows the fans to have some freedom to create their own special experience, focusing on originality is a great way to connect with the target audience. There are many ideas of how to do this which can be found in Figure 2 (Drenten, J. et al., 2012).

Tailgating can provide a huge economic benefit to the school. By having fans continuously return to an exciting tailgate atmosphere provided by the athletic department for every game and every season, the university will see long-term improvements in ticket sales and alumni support. The surrounding community will also benefit because lodging and restaurants will gain business from supporters coming to athletic events (Drenten, J. et al., 2012).

Collaboration: the Athletic Department and the university's administration and Alumni Association working together to brand the university and the football team.

An athletic department is only one part of the university as a whole. However, it is an extremely important one, which can solely brand a university by claiming a place in the minds of the public when they think about that institution. When thinking about a football team, the university should want fans to adopt a sense of connection with that team. "Identification with a sports team can provide

people with an important identity-prop, a source of 'we-feelings' and a sense of belonging in what otherwise would be an isolated existence" (Dunning, F., 1999, p. 6).

In the article "We're Gators, not Gator Fans", this idea of a unified collection of people identifying with a team is described well. Followers of the University of Florida Football team do not consider themselves fans; being a Gator is a lifestyle to them. They truly believe in the phrase, "It's great to be a Gator". Students, families, alumni and those that did not even attend the university adopt this lifestyle. They identify themselves with the Gator team brand by wearing the school colors, buying team gear, flying flags, tailgating and traveling to games (Gibson, H., Willming, C., & Holdnak, A., 2002). In addition to the Florida Gators, other universities, like The University of Southern California, the University of Texas, and the University of Alabama have this type of fan identification. This is exactly what Cal Poly needs to create and implement. Mustang Football should generate a sense of pride, enjoyment, and everlasting memories, not just for students, but for all Cal Poly lovers who call themselves Mustangs. Identifying as a Mustang is a life experience.

Cal Poly as an institution and all of its communities are Mustangs. The administration has already taken steps to converge the idea of the "Mustang Way", a set of guidelines that the Cal Poly Athletic Department has its athletes abide by, from the student-athletes to the rest of the student body. While this is a good first step, there are many other strategic scenarios that can be implemented. I will be examining this facet from my interviews and will give my recommendations later on in the paper.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Data Sources

For this study, I have chosen five experts in the fields of sports public relations, branding, social media, and Greek Life. Each participant was asked a series of questions focused on their area of expertise to help increase knowledge about these topics in order to improve Cal Poly Football's fan base and ultimately game day attendance.

Participants

The participants chosen for this study will be the following:

Samantha Coxe is a member of Delta Gamma at the University of Southern California.

Alex Horncliff is a member of the Lambda Chi Alpha fraternity at California Polytechnic State University San Luis Obispo, as well as a former Cal Poly athlete.

Jordan Moore is the Social Media Director for the Athletic Department at the University of Southern California.

Randy Ryan is the Founder of the John R. Wooden Classic Basketball Tournament. This tournament revolutionized collegiate basketball.

John Eckel is a PR/branding guru who has worked with some of the top sports and entertainment accounts in the world.

Interview Design

Because each of my interview subjects are experts in different fields of study, their questions were tailored specifically to them.

Data Collection

The data collection for this study consisted of interviews with experts in their field. The interviews were conducted during March of 2014.

Data Presentation

The data collected from each interview was documented through audio recordings, or in one case, an email. This method ensured absolute accuracy when transcribing my subject's responses.

Limitations

The main limitation of this study is time. Due to the fact that California Polytechnic State University is on the quarter system, and the time frame for senior project is one quarter long, there are only 10 weeks to do research, conduct interviews, and complete the paper. If this project could be extended to multiple quarters, that would give the opportunity for more extensive research. The time frame also limited my options as to who I could speak to. I wanted to interview an extremely well known NCAA Division 1 basketball coach. However due to this project taking place during the basketball season, this interview could not be arranged.

Delimitations

Because each of my subjects were experts in different fields, I chose to tailor each questionnaire specifically to them. I collected data that was appropriate for each subject matters' interest, and each of the interview responses answered the original research questions.

Chapter 4

Data Analysis

Chapter 4 of this research paper will provide a more detailed description of each of the participants from their interviews. It will summarize each of the respondents' main talking points by using direct quotations or paraphrases. The answers will then be examined, analyzed, and compared to the original research and literature as compiled in Chapter 2

Description of Participating Respondents

Alex Horncliff

Alex Horncliff is a junior Kinesiology student at Cal Poly. The past three years, Alex has been a member of the Lambda Chi Alpha fraternity, and is currently serving as Fraternity Risk Manager. In the 2012-2013 school year, he won Younger Brother of the Year. He was also voted as the 2013-2014 Fraternity Man of the Year at Cal Poly. Alex is the Director of Public Relations for the InterFraternity Council, which is the governing body of all fraternity life. He also participates in Associated Students, Inc. where he is a Board of Directors member for the College of Science and Mathematics and was appointed on the Executive cabinet. Alex was also the second year field captain of the Cal Poly Track and Field Team in the 2012-2013 season.

Samantha Coxe

Samantha Coxe is a senior Psychology Honors student at the University of Southern California. For the past four years, she has been a member of the Delta Gamma sorority, serving as Vice President PanHellenic and Director of Recruitment.

Outside of the Greek community, she has been involved with the Undergraduate Student Government for the past four years, serving as Justice, Director of Alumni Affairs, and Greek Senator. She is involved in Society 53, the Student Alumni Leadership program, which represents the USC Alumni Association, connecting USC students with alumni. Samantha was also a Spirit Leader for USC Athletics. Finally, Samantha will be attending New York University Law School in the fall.

Jordan Moore

Jordan Moore is the Director of Social Media for the University of Southern California Athletic Department. He is in charge of running all of their social platforms, including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube and blog focusing on creative content and digital marketing. He also assists in the creative for their mainstream marketing and advertising.

Randy Ryan

Ryan was the Founder and President of the Inaugural 1994 John R. Wooden Classic, a globally televised basketball event. While featuring four of the top five ranked teams in America, the five-hour event was televised live nationally on NBC, and televised globally to 84 countries. In addition, the event was broadcast live nationally on the American Sports Radio Network, and broadcast globally on the Armed Forces Radio Network. Ryan was a Vice Chairman of the prestigious John R. Wooden Award, which is presented annually to college basketball's most outstanding men's player. A partial list of the coaches, athletes, celebrities, and brands he has worked with includes John Wooden, John Calipari, Jerry West, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, Steve Lavin, Rick Pitino, Roy Williams, Jim Harrick, Mitch

Kupchak, Bill Walton, Lorenzo Romar, Jamaal Wilkes, Arsenio Hall, Michael Warren, Miss America-Leanza Cornett, Tom Daly, Tim Ryan, Brad Mayne, NBC, Disneyland, Spalding, Tiffany & Co., Gillette, American Airlines, Hilton Hotels, Sharp, and NAPA.

John Eckel

John Eckel is considered among the most respected and successful professionals in the sports marketing, branded entertainment and public relations industries. He was a senior commercial endorsements talent agent with the world's #1 talent agency, Creative Artists Agency (CAA). He has worked for Worldwide Sports and Entertainment Marketing for leading PR firm Hill and Knowlton. A partial list of the companies, celebrities and athletes he has worked with include Seattle Seahawks, Rose Bowl, International Olympic Committee, and The PGA of America, The AVP, Michael Douglas, Will Ferrell, Zac Efron, Mercedes Fashion Week, Diane Von Furstenberg, Marc Jacobs, Michael Jordan, Magic Johnson, Toby Keith, and many more.

Interview Findings

Each participant was asked a series of questions related to their area of expertise. Because each interview was tailored around a different subject, the interview questions varied from participant to participant.

Alex Horncliff:

The interview with Alex Horncliff was designed to focus on the lack of relationship between the Cal Poly Football program and the Greek system. Horncliff has a unique perspective because he has been on both sides, as a member of a

prominent fraternity on campus, as well as a track and field athlete for Cal Poly. The following are important quotes from Horncliff on this lack of relationship and thoughts on how to foster one.

- "As far as athletes go, they A. don't understand Greek life, or B. don't like Greek life. Their coaches always tell them, "Don't do it. Don't do it." So they get that in their head and they automatically assume that it's bad. They don't understand that it is almost the exact same thing as being on a sports team, but we don't have practices" (Appendix A).
- "I think it's a lack of understanding on each side's part" (Appendix A).
- "I think the biggest thing I see, is there needs to be a group of people in a house that are super passionate about sports and really want to go to the games and events. They are going to influence everyone around them to go. And once another house is beating them in sports attendance, it will be a rolling effect" (Appendix A).
- "I think it's got to start with relationships and giving people the opportunity to meet each other. We need to break down those barriers because really, we're not that different" (Appendix A).
- "If we integrated events with a sorority and a fraternity like we talked about earlier. Or for example, they could do something where they gave an award to a fraternity and a sorority who had the best football attendance in the fall and they earned \$500 to a charity of their choice. With the competition, everyone would be like, 'OK let's go to games and get rowdy!'" (Appendix A).

- “If you could encourage tailgate competitions, like who has the best tailgate and come up with criteria for it, or design the best tailgate set up. It could be anything, but competition is really the best way to get people involved” (Appendix A).
- “Talk to the coaches... If the coaches gave them the opportunity to try it out for themselves, maybe more of them would rush” (Appendix A).

Samantha Coxe

The interview with Samantha Coxe was designed to focus on the relationship between the Greek community and the Football Program at the University of Southern California, one of the most prominent, if not the most historic football program in the nation. The goal was to get enough information to compare and contrast USC’s Greek relations with Cal Poly’s.

- “In general, I feel that the USC Greek system is disconnected from the happenings of the USC Athletic Department. As a spirit leader, members of the Greek community rarely attended athletic events such as pep rallies before games or special announcements. However, the Greek community reveres the football team and I will often see football players involved in Greek events. I believe that the Greek system supports the football team” (Appendix B).
- “The Greeks tailgate by hosting parties at their fraternities and inviting specific sororities over to celebrate. Greeks usually tend to imbibe alcohol and play games with students, alumni, and parents” (Appendix B).

- “I do not have any interaction with the coaching staff. Our new head coach did attend a speaker event at Bovard two weeks ago and the students were so excited to hear him speak. I wish there was more of a connection between the coaches and the students” (Appendix B).
- “Greeks tend to be very supportive of the players. Many players are members of the Greek community. I have seen Greek members send good luck, as well as congratulatory messages to various players” (Appendix B).
- “I believe that Greek members would love to attend and participate in the pep rallies. If it would be feasible, a pep rally on the ‘Row’ would be a great way to encourage Greeks to support the football team and Athletic Department. Furthermore, perhaps hosting a competition between the Greek chapters with who has the best attendance at a game and having the team or quarterback send a message to that house saying thanks would boost morale” (Appendix B).

Jordan Moore

The interview with Jordan Moore was designed to focus on how social media impacts the brand of a college football program. As social media has developed into one of the main forms of reaching out to publics, his wisdom was a valuable asset.

- “It [social media] is significantly cheaper, to the point of being free. So if you’re doing it well, you’re not really even doing it. You’re just the one lighting the fire, and everyone else is sort of marketing you for you, which is obviously the goal in the end” (Appendix C).

- “And the biggest thing that’s changed with social media is that they used to have to rely on reporters to break news for you. You’d have to send them a press release and you’d hope they took your quotes and your side of it. Now we break our own news” (Appendix C).
- “On Facebook I never post more than twice in a day...Twitter, the more the merrier. I’d estimate five to 10 times a day. But on a game day, it’s going to be 50 times...Instagram, I’d probably say once or twice a day. I think it’s the more the merrier there too, it’s just having the content to do anything relevant. How often do you have five photos you want to put up in a day? YouTube, obviously...we put up as many YouTube videos a possible. We’re not really focused on YouTube subscribers. YouTube is really about storing our videos and being able to easily link to the other social mediums. So there’s no number on YouTube videos” (Appendix C).
- “One of the big things that they [SpreeCasts] allow us to do is they are great for fan interaction and opportunity to sort of humanize when it comes to coaches or athletic directors or whoever is on there, the people get to know them. It’s sort of that celebrity figure that they want to tap down and who they’re always mad at, they get to ask them some questions and it sort of clears up a lot of issues. The other thing that I like about it is it has given us the opportunity to do things that we’ve never done before” (Appendix C).
- “One of the weaknesses that we have to deal with is that we can’t get involved in any of the recruiting business. And it’s become such a big business for all of these websites that are dedicated to football and men’s

basketball recruiting. The cool thing we can do now is that when these guys do sign, we can get them on and it's a way to interview them and to start marketing them...That in itself was a cool thing and that the fact a kid from high school can get on his laptop and can hop on and we can introduce him to the USC fans and really start the buzz for him almost a year out before he actually takes the court or the field for us" (Appendix C).

- "We definitely promote our players' social media accounts and want them to be able to build their brands and their individuality" (Appendix C).
- "You really try to market your marketing campaigns about the brand and tradition and the identity of the team and the coach. Obviously the coach is someone that you want to get involved in all of that, but you want to promote the individual players as much as you can, especially if they are succeeding and competing for awards and that brings glory back onto the department" (Appendix C).
- "They [head coaches] are going to have a following and if they do have an strong social media presence, then for all the reasons I gave you before of why its important to be on social media, the same applies to a coach being on social media...Certainly coaches that are accessible and open to new things, it can be extremely valuable, particularly in recruiting, as a means to connect with the next generation's players on a level that they understand and certainly in terms of selling the program" (Appendix C).
- "I think the most effective way is pulling on the emotion of being a part of this community. At the end of the day, fans watch sports because they want

to be a part of something and certainly in a university, when you actually are, it's one of the few times" (Appendix C).

- "No matter what the social medium, no matter what you're doing, the more that you can pull on that sense of community and in our case we call it, "Trojan Family", that's the stuff that really takes off. A sense of pride or nationalism or patriotism for USC as much as you can do that kind of stuff, that's the stuff that really gets people fired up" (Appendix C).
- "The stuff that people want to stick around for is the access. If you can give them an angle on what they already like, that they wouldn't see anywhere else is key. Whether its photos or videos, social media is driven by pictures and video now. As much as you can give them access to places behind the velvet rope that they cant go, that's what social media's about. Whether it's following a team or following celebrities, they want to see what's going on in the places that they can't get to" (Appendix C).
- "What matters is how much you can get the people interested in your product and brand and how you can get them involved and engaged" (Appendix C).

Randy Ryan

The interview with Randy Ryan was designed to examine means of branding the Cal Poly Football program from a highly acclaimed sports executive who has branded other major sporting events in the past.

- "I would create events that would bring attention to the program. I would create events leading up to the season. I would create events for spring

football. I'd have meet and greets. I would invite the public, the high schools, the Pop Warner teams, the YMCA, the Boys and Girls Club, every organization that had youth. People can be 25 years old and go to a game and not have kids, but families are always looking for things to do. You have to make the football game the thing to do on a Saturday" (Appendix D).

- "Get the fraternities and sororities involved. Create a sense of excitement that this is the place to be. Have special events with the fraternities and sororities. Reach out to San Luis Obispo County. Reach out to the Alumni Association... Create regular newsletters that go to the alumni via email. That's a way to foster excitement and would not only get them to attend events, but it could inspire them to make financial donations. They'd be more willing to do so if they felt connected to the program" (Appendix D).
- "You mentioned to me your idea of having student leaders in the Greek system meet with the coaches. Maybe have them meet once every couple of weeks to talk about who's hurt, what they're planning on doing differently with this opponent, make them feel connected" (Appendix D).
- "There needs to be a better culture with Greeks and athletes up there. That begins with the coaching staff. They need to tell the players to encourage the Greeks to come to games. Part of teaching the young guys that come into the program that we support our Greek culture here and that they are important to us. You won't see that kind of hostility between Greeks and athletes at other schools. They embrace the relationship at other schools...It's a trickle down effect. Because so many people are a part of the Greek system, they

- will help support creating events to get the student body as a whole to come. That will make games more exciting” (Appendix D).
- “Competition is always good. Maybe some sort of monetary incentive or having a letter or an email personally from Coach Walsh saying something like, ‘Congrats to ___ fraternity for having the best tailgate and destroying the competition. Keep it up and looking forward to seeing what you do next week.’ Make the Greeks feel engaged and feel that they matter to the program” (Appendix D).
 - “Get the people thinking, ‘School is over for the week! Let’s party and lets get up early and lets hit the game and hit it hard! We’re going to be tailgating like maniacs!’ Get the feeling started early that for 24 hours we are going to party hard for this football game. Right now, Cal Poly doesn’t have that culture. There’s no reason that Cal Poly can’t do that” (Appendix D).
 - “Well what I did in my event, I personally wrote to the alumni associations of UMass, UCLA, Kansas, and Kentucky every week. I told them what we were doing and what was new. It didn’t matter what it was. I wrote a letter, and back then all we could do was fax, and I sent it to every president of each one of those chapters of each alumni association. I just told them what as new. Got so many great responses back from those letters saying, ‘Wow the President of the Wooden Classic is personally writing to us. Thanks so much for taking the time to contact us’” (Appendix D).
 - “I assume there’s databases for each of the sorority and fraternity alumni from Cal Poly? Start reaching out to them via Facebook or social media or

email. Let them know that week what is new, how the game went the week before, who you're playing this week, what's coming up, and let them know that they are wanted at the game" (Appendix D).

- "You need to grab the audience that is right at your fingertips. Saturdays should be devoted to football. There are no other distractions. If you're in LA, kids are going home, they're going to a Laker game, UCLA games, SC Games. In SLO, you don't have anything like that. Attack those people and let them know what's going on. Get people excited and make sure that momentum keeps rolling over week after week. It's about creating that culture" (Appendix D).

John Eckel

- "While branding Cal Poly Football is the ultimate objective, I would take this a step further and suggest that the branding and PR challenge is even broader. Any planning initiatives should be addressed in the broader context of the school itself to gain the academic institution nationwide awareness. Cal Poly sports program plans should be an extension of, consistent with and flow from the overall planning, objectives and initiatives of the overall university" (Appendix E).
- "You need to create the Cal Poly Football Ultimate Interactive Experience Event. Invite Fans, alumni, students and former players, high schoolers/prospects, prospective sponsors, media partners, celebrities, former/current NFL stars/announcers, local opinion leaders and business CEO's and credentialed media to meet. Have fun football competitions

- including flag football games and skills games which would be sponsored by a sports equipment manufacturer or sporting goods chain. Have a training table luncheon, sponsored by food sponsor. Have picture opportunities sponsored by cell phone maker or camera manufacturer with video clips and pictures posted on YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter” (Appendix E).
- “ESPN ‘SportsCenter’ is the ultimate end game for any sports brand attempting to make its stamp on the national sports scene. Consider a media spokespersons meeting and ongoing dialogue like a Cal Poly Football newsletter and periodic outreach with ESPN SportsCenter producers in Bristol, ESPN Game Day producers and on-air personalities like Lee Corso, and invite them to attend/cover news, run footage of big rivalry game or games, package up and place post-game via satellite TV game footage for ESPN “Play of the Day”/”Play of the Week”, etc” (Appendix E).

Research Questions

For this study, the following six research questions were developed in order to examine the ways in which public relations techniques affect brand, and consequently how brand develops team identification and a consistent fan base. The following are excerpts from the literature in relation to the original research questions.

1. How does a strong brand improve a sports team?

This question was aimed at exploring the very foundation of this study. Without a brand, an athletic team will not generate or sustain fans. By examining

this on a broad scale, one could determine how brand and athletics must go hand in hand.

- Branding is the most popular tool used in the sports industry today (Hardy, S. et al., 2012).
- The branding of a sport draws fans, but also creates tradition and legacy. A former president of the University of Michigan has been quoted as saying, “Nine of 10 people don’t understand what you are saying when you talk about research universities. But you say ‘Michigan’ and they understand those striped helmets running under the banner.” (Hardy, S. et al., 2012, p. 495).
- “Sports are a product to be bought and sold” (Hardy, S., Norman, B., & Sceery, S., 2012, p. 485).

2. How does a fan come to form team identification?

Question 2 was studied to understand why people develop emotional attachments to athletic teams. By determining the reasons why people chose to become a fan of a team, one could easily come up with a plan for how to draw more fans and sustain them.

- “Social identity is that part of an individual’s self-concept which derives from knowledge of his membership of a social group together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership” (Heere, B. et al., 2011, p. 408).

- A collegiate athletic program has the capability of being a symbol of a university, which in turn could have a positive effect on the strength of the fan base (Heere, B. et al., 2011).
 - “Sharing the values and sense of mission as a student with the university is closely related to the ability to connect and identify with the institution’s football team” (Mark, P. P., Stinson, J., & Patton, E., 2010, p. 74).
 - A fan chooses to associate with an athletic team by way of affinity and affiliation. When affinity, “images and personality are congruent with their own sense of self” (Mark, P. P. et al., 2010, p. 68) is combined with affiliation, consumers believe an organization ‘emulates’ or shares similar principles or values to their own” (Mark, P. P. et al., 2010, p. 68), a desire to make a connection will develop, which in turn should prompt team identification.
3. How does social media play a part in branding a collegiate sport?

Question 3 was designed to explore social media’s impact on branding of collegiate athletics. While social media is relatively a new medium, it has taken off and quite possibly becoming the most used method of news dissemination. With the use of social media and knowing how it affects college athletics, a team could dramatically improve their brand.

- “From the creation of Facebook in 2004 and Twitter in 2006 to the present, social media has provided new ways for individuals, athletes, coaches and schools to communicate and share information. Coaches can use Twitter to connect with fans, impress recruits and promote their programs” (Clavero, G., 2011, p. 309).

- "It's hard to miss Twitter and Facebook as communication tools in this day in age, and I think if you're not in spaces where a large number of people are you're really missing out on an opportunity to interact and to have that instant communication" (Clavero, G., 2011, p. 309).
 - In addition to the fans posting their opinions via social media, the team should be using various forms of social media to strengthen their brand and promote two-way communication with their fans. When this interactivity is established with their followers, fan engagement should increase (Pronschinske, M., Mark, D. G., & Walker, M., 2012).
 - Athletic teams should use YouTube actively to post videos on many different social media outlets and even team websites. By doing this, teams can keep fans watching videos on the specific pages they choose, rather than redirecting them away from an organization's page (Clavero, G., 2011).
4. How could the Greek community become a significant public of the Cal Poly Football team?

Question 4 was created to study the extremely non-existent relationship between the Cal Poly Football program and the Greek community. This large group of students is an untapped asset for the football program and by determining how to foster this relationship, could have innumerable benefits to the Cal Poly Football fan base and quality of the game day culture. The literature was very non-conclusive about this question because not much research has been done in this field.

- "It has been stated that the communities of the university 'are possible points of attachment in the formation of team identity' ...while the football team is a

formal subsystem of the university's athletic department, it is also part of the larger university structure" (Heere, B. et al., 2011, p. 411).

5. How do you build a relationship with the stakeholders and publics of an athletic program?

Question 5 was designed to explore the ways Cal Poly Football can better outreach to their current fans and gain new fans. Fans are absolutely necessary in sport. The answer to this question will provide insight as to how these relationship can be better maintained.

- "The fan is not merely a passive spectator. He (sic) is...a vital component in the proper functioning of the institution of sport" (Edwards H., 1973, p. 23).
- By posting information, as well as conversation starters, the fans will feel engaged with the program. "Given the reported findings, this exchange relationship is not only important, but necessary to increase Facebook fan numbers" (Pronschinske, M. et al., 2012, p. 229).
- Ideas for keeping the fans engaged with the program would be asking fans to upload photos of themselves at the games and other in-game promotions focused around social media (Pronschinske, M. et al., 2012).
- Tailgating is an excellent way of developing relationships. Tailgaters are reliving their experiences in college, while also looking to the future of creating new memories with friends and family, as well as seeing the university they support prosper (Drenten, J., et al., 2012).

6. How can the athletic department work in concert with the university's administration and alumni association to collaborate in branding the university and the football team?

Question 6 was designed to examine how even though athletics, academics, and alumni are all different aspects of Cal Poly, we are all still Mustangs. By understanding how to better outreach to these publics, we can create a better sense of a Mustang community.

- "Identification with a sports team can provide people with an important identity-prop, a source of 'we-feelings' and a sense of belonging in what otherwise would be an isolated existence" (Dunning, F., 1999, p. 6).

Research Data

For this study, it was important to consider the opinion of experts as well as researching previous studies on the topics of public relations, branding, social media, and Greek Life. In order to obtain this data, Alex Horncliff, a fraternity man and student-athlete, Samantha Coxe, a sorority woman, Jordan Moore, a social media director, Randy Ryan, a sports executive, and John Eckel, a sports public relations expert, were each interviewed for the study. The following are their responses in relation to the original research questions.

1. How does a strong brand improve a sports team?

Randy Ryan

- "Every university's athletic department should develop and implement a strategic branding plan for their football program. Many athletic

departments, such as Cal Poly, believe they don't have the financial and/or human resources to aggressively brand their football teams. Consequently their promotional efforts are more reactive than proactive. This perspective not only reduces awareness of the team's brand, but also diminishes the university's brand as well. A successful branding plan will not only help recruit more elite football players to the school, but will also help attract student applicants with GPAs higher than their predecessors. For example, Florida State University has acknowledged that the branding of their prominent football program over the last two decades has contributed to an increase in their academic reputation. In addition, a strong football brand will cause a domino effect throughout the university, resulting in the university generating substantial revenue from multiple profit centers.”

2. How does a fan come to form team identification?

John Eckel

- “Cal Poly sports program plans should be an extension of, consistent with and flow from the overall planning, objectives and initiatives of the overall university. By buying into this approach, all university leaders and brand ambassadors will be working collaboratively in the same direction, and delivering consistent messaging to the school’s target audiences” (Appendix E).

Jordan Moore

- “At the end of the day, fans watch sports because they want to be a part of something and certainly in a university, when you actually are, it’s one of the few times. If you like a pro team and if you say we, people make fun of you. But if you say we about being a part of a university, as a student or an alum, it makes sense and there is that sense of ‘we’. No matter what the social medium, no matter what you’re doing, the more that you can pull on that sense of community and in our case we call it, “Trojan Family”, that’s the stuff that really takes off. A sense of pride or nationalism or patriotism for USC as much as you can do that kind of stuff, that’s the stuff that really gets people fired up” (Appendix C).

3. How does social media play a part in branding a collegiate sport?

Jordan Moore

- “It [social media] is significantly cheaper, to the point of being free. So if you’re doing it well, you’re not really even doing it. You’re just the one lighting the fire, and everyone else is sort of marketing you for you, which is obviously the goal in the end” (Appendix C).
- “And the biggest thing that’s changed with social media is that they used to have to rely on reporters to break news for you. You’d have to send them a press release and took your quotes and your side of it. Now we break our own news” (Appendix C).
- “One of the big things that they [SpreeCasts] allow us to do is they are great for fan interaction and opportunity to sort of humanize when it comes to coaches or athletic directors or whoever is on there, the people get to know

them. It's sort of that celebrity figure that they want to tap down and who they're always mad at, they get to ask them some questions and it sort of clears up a lot of issues" (Appendix C).

- "No matter what the social medium, no matter what you're doing, the more that you can pull on that sense of community and in our case we call it, 'Trojan Family', that's the stuff that really takes off. A sense of pride or nationalism or patriotism for USC as much as you can do that kind of stuff, that's the stuff that really gets people fired up" (Appendix C).
- "The stuff that people want to stick around for is the access. If you can give them an angle on what they already like, that they wouldn't see anywhere else is key. Whether its photos or videos, social media is driven by pictures and video now. As much as you can give them access to places behind the velvet rope that they can't go, that's what social media's about. Whether it's following a team or following celebrities, they want to see what's going on in the places that they can't get to" (Appendix C).

John Eckel

- "Always post great plays on YouTube" (Appendix E).
4. How could the Greek community become a significant public of the Cal Poly Football team?

Alex Horncliff

- "Their coaches always tell them, "Don't do it. Don't do it." So they get that in their head and they automatically assume that it's bad. They don't understand that it is almost the exact same thing as being on a sports team,

but we don't have practices... I think one mutual thing that we both have is that we don't understand each other" (Appendix A).

- "I think that [meetings with Greeks and representatives from football] would be a cool thing to do and I think the best way to do it would be to integrate it into IFC. IFC is our hub for getting information out. Some people will be really passionate about it and some people won't, but if you cast a wider net you get more fish" (Appendix A).
- "I think the biggest thing I see, is there needs to be a group of people in a house that are super passionate about sports and really want to go to the games and events. They are going to influence everyone around them to go. And once another house is beating them in sports attendance, it will be a rolling effect" (Appendix A).
- "With the competition, everyone would be like, 'OK let's go to games and get rowdy!'" (Appendix A).

Samantha Coxe

- "However, the Greek community [at USC] reveres the football team and I will often see football players involved in Greek events" (Appendix B).
- "The Greeks [at USC] tailgate by hosting parties at their fraternities and inviting specific sororities over to celebrate" (Appendix B).
- "I wish there was more of a connection between the coaches and the students" (Appendix B).
- "I believe that Greek members would love to attend and participate in the pep rallies. If it would be feasible, a pep rally on the 'Row' would be a great

way to encourage Greeks to support the football team and Athletic Department. Furthermore, perhaps hosting a competition between the Greek chapters with who has the best attendance at a game and having the team or quarterback send a message to that house saying thanks would boost morale” (Appendix B).

Randy Ryan

- “There needs to be a better culture with Greeks and athletes up there. That begins with the coaching staff. They need to tell the players to encourage the Greeks to come to games. Part of teaching the young guys that come into the program that we support our Greek culture here and that they are important to us” (Appendix D).
 - “Because so many people are a part of the Greek system, they will help support creating events to get the student body as a whole to come. That will make games more exciting” (Appendix D).
 - “Competition is always good” (Appendix D).
 - “Make the Greeks feel engaged and feel that they matter to the program. Do something the night before as well” (Appendix D).
 - “Have the coaches and players talk about how much they need Greek support and appreciate it. Yes, it will be a culture change” (Appendix D).
5. How do you build a relationship with the stakeholders and publics of an athletic program?

Randy Ryan

- “I would create events leading up to the season, I would create events for spring football. I’d have meet and greets. I would invite the public, the high schools, the pop Warner teams, the YMCA, the Boys and Girls Club, every organization that had youth” (Appendix D).
- “You need to grab the audience that is right at your fingertips. Saturdays should be devoted to football. There are no other distractions. If you’re in LA, kids are going home, they’re going to a Laker game, UCLA games, SC Games. In SLO, you don’t have anything like that. Attack those people and let them know what’s going on. Get people excited and make sure that momentum keeps rolling over week after week. It’s about creating that culture” (Appendix D).

John Eckel

- “You need to create the Cal Poly Football Ultimate Interactive Experience Event. Invite Fans, alumni, students and former players, high schoolers/prospects, prospective sponsors, media partners, celebrities, former/current NFL stars/announcers, local opinion leaders and business CEO’s and credentialed media to meet and compete in football fun day including flag football games and skills competitions which would be sponsored by a sports equipment manufacturer or sporting goods chain. Have a training table luncheon, sponsored by food sponsor. Have picture opportunities sponsored by cell phone maker or camera manufacturer with video clips and pictures posted on YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter” (Appendix E).

- “ESPN ‘SportsCenter’ is the ultimate end game for any sports brand attempting to make its stamp on the national sports scene. Consider a media spokespersons meeting and ongoing dialogue like a Cal Poly Football newsletter and periodic outreach with ESPN SportsCenter producers in Bristol, ESPN Game Day producers and on-air personalities like Lee Corso, and invite them to attend/cover news, run footage of big rivalry game or games, package up and place post-game via satellite TV game footage for ESPN “Play of the Day”/”Play of the Week”, etc. Always post great plays on YouTube. Package and send game highlight/great play footage to local sports TV producers. Also, send Cal Poly Football apparel to national and local on-air sports personalities and producers at key sports media and invite them to attend games, pitch them to run highlights, etc. Develop specific programming around marquee players and head coach to build their brands, and in turn Cal Poly’s” (Appendix E).
- “In sports media, I’d reach out to the trade and consumer facets of that market. Sports Business Journal and Team Marketing Report would fall under the trade category, while ESPN, USA Today Sports, Sports Illustrated, Football News Weekly, local sports TV, radio, and print would all be consumer. I’d do the same for the business media as well with local newspapers, the LA Times, and LA Business Journal. Men’s and youth lifestyle magazines would be another outlet, like Men’s Health and Fitness, GQ, and SI for Kids” (Appendix E).

6. How can the athletic department work in concert with the university's administration and alumni association to collaborate in branding the university and the football team?

Randy Ryan

- “Reach out to San Luis Obispo County, reach out to the Alumni Association. They can create events that draw those people in. Create regular newsletters that go to the alumni via email. That’s a way to foster excitement and would not only get them to attend events, but it could inspire them to make financial donations. They’d be more willing to do so if they felt connected to the program. There’s a lot of alumni. Just imagine if you could get them to make a small donation of \$10 each, that could be close to a million dollars” (Appendix D).
- “I wrote a letter, and back then all we could do was fax, and I sent to every president of each one of those chapters of each alumni association” (Appendix D).
- “I assume there’s databases for each of the sorority and fraternity alumni from Cal Poly? Start reaching out to them via Facebook or social media or email. Let them know that week what is new, how the game went the week before, who you’re playing this week, what’s coming up, and let them know that they are wanted at the game” (Appendix D).

Jordan Moore

- “At the end of the day, fans watch sports because they want to be a part of something and certainly in a university, when you actually are, it’s one of the

few times. If you like a pro team and if you say we, people make fun of you. But if you say we about being a part of a university, as a student or an alum, it makes sense and there is that sense of 'we'. No matter what the social medium, no matter what you're doing, the more that you can pull on that sense of community and in our case we call it, "Trojan Family", that's the stuff that really takes off. A sense of pride or nationalism or patriotism for USC as much as you can do that kind of stuff, that's the stuff that really gets people fired up" (Appendix C).

Chapter 5

Discussion and Recommendations

Summary

This study was conducted in order to obtain a better understanding of how to improve Cal Poly Football's brand in order to increase game attendance and build a consistent fan base. Branding is essential for the success of any athletic team, and by discovering ways to better brand Mustang Football, the program could greatly benefit.

While previous literature on this subject was helpful to uncover some excellent tactics, it was augmented with interviews conducted with experts in their respective fields. My study aimed to answer the following:

1. How does a strong brand improve a sports team?
2. How does a fan come to form team identification?
3. How does social media play a part in branding a collegiate sport?
4. How could the Greek community become a significant public of the Cal Poly Football team?
5. How do you build a relationship with the stakeholders and publics of an athletic program?
6. How can the athletic department work in concert with the university's administration and alumni association to collaborate in branding the university and the football team?

Combining the interview responses with the research literature provided an excellent foundation for discussion and recommendation of how to better brand Cal Poly to increase consistent fan base.

Discussion

After analyzing the data from Chapter 4, and examining the connections between the expert responses as well as the literature, the following conclusions have been made.

1. How does a strong brand improve a sports team?

Ryan discussed how a successful branding plan will help recruit better athletes, attract students with higher GPAs, and generate revenue from multiple profit centers. The literature explained how branding is the most popular tool in the sports industry today (Hardy, S. et al., 2012). With a brand, a team not only draws fans but creates legacy and tradition that will become special for that university.

It can be concluded that brand improves not only an athletic team in terms of high quality athletes, but it improves the university as a whole by better students applying and increasing revenue coming into the school.

2. How does a fan come to form team identification?

In his interview response, Eckel discussed how branding the team would also involve branding the school. Finding an identification with a university will also identify the fan with that team. Moore discussed how being a part of a university is a “we” experience and it is a sense of community. That sense of community is where the identification takes place. In the literature, Heere et al. (2011) discussed how one’s social identity is derived from having a membership of a group with a “value

and an emotion significance attached to that membership". Mark et al. (2010) mentioned how sharing values and a mission with a university creates an identification with that school's football team.

It is possible to conclude that fans will form team identification when they share the values of the team, especially of a university that they attend, because they want to share a sense of connection and community with others and experience that "we" feeling.

3. How does social media play a part in branding a collegiate sport?

According to Moore, social media has many different components in which it can brand a collegiate athletic program. From Facebook and Twitter and Instagram, to Spreecast and YouTube, there are so many resources to ignite the fire of conversation among the fans and grant them access to places where they would normally never be able to go. The literature discussed how coaches should be online to connect with fans through two-way communication, publicize the program to recruits and communicate information (Clavero, 2011).

It can be concluded that social media can be used in a multitude of ways to brand a collegiate sport. The most advantageous way to utilize social media tools is by implementing two-way communication on these outlets to create that connection with the fans.

4. How could the Greek community become a significant public of the Cal Poly Football team?

In the interview responses, Horncliff and Ryan both agreed upon the idea of involving competition among the houses in terms of tailgating or attendance. They

also both mentioned how a cultural change between Greeks and football needs to begin with the coaches encouraging the development of a positive relationship. Coxe mentioned how she wishes there was more of a connection between the coaches and the students at her university. There was no literature on the specific subject of Greek relations, however Heere et al. (2011) stated that “the communities of the university ‘are possible points of attachment in the formation of team identity’”.

Overall, it can be concluded that Greek life is an important community within Cal Poly’s student life, and they should be a resource that is utilized in terms of building a relationship and taking the necessary steps to make them dedicated fans of the football program.

5. How do you build a relationship with the stakeholders and publics of an athletic program?

Ryan and Eckel both mentioned in their interview responses that events are an important way to build these relationships with the stakeholders and publics. The literature appeared to agree with the expert interviews. It mentioned that fans are not simply spectators and are vital components of sport (Edwards, 1973). It also stated that keeping fans engaged and making them feel like they are contributing to the program is important in the development of relationships as well (Pronschinske, 2012).

It can be concluded that engaging the fans through social events and two-way communication is the best way to build personal relationships with stakeholders to create a consistent fan base.

6. How can the athletic department work in concert with the university's administration and alumni association to collaborate to brand the university and the football team?

Ryan discussed sending letters to the Alumni Associations to stay connected with them. He also mentioned specifically targeting Greek alumni as well. Moore discussed focusing on the pride of the university and cross promoting with the university outlets along with the athletic outlets to get people excited. The literature discussed how team identification provides a sense of belonging with a group and combats isolation (Dunning, 1999).

Overall, it can be concluded that building off the sense of Mustang Pride and reaching out to alumni to reignite their passion for Cal Poly, along with cross-promotion is the best way for the athletics, administration, and alumni to all work together to brand the football team.

Recommendations

The following are my recommendations for the Cal Poly Football program.

Brand

Cal Poly should implement a proactive strategic branding plan, rather than continuing to use the reactive one they currently employ. As previously stated, this will help recruit better football players and ultimately higher quality athletes across the board. In addition, the university's brand will strengthen from the improvement of the football brand, better students will apply, and more money will come to the university.

Meet and greets should be scheduled throughout the season. The team can take photos, sign posters, and meet the public. High school players, Pop Warner teams, the YMCA, the Boy's and Girl's Club, and any youth organization should be invited. Building these relationships will make the fans feel special, connected to the program, and more likely to regularly attend more games.

By reaching out to specific outlets like ESPN, SI Kids, and the LA Times to pitch stories, Cal Poly could increase not only the local fan base, but a much wider one as well.

As John Eckel mentioned in his interview (Appendix E), a big event should be created, inviting the previously mentioned youth groups, as well as invite NFL players, announcers, and the media. Besides the interaction with the players, the event would include games, a training table lunch, and other fun activities. This experience would be a massive tool to brand the program and by inviting the media, have the potential to gain national awareness.

An additional concept would be to send Cal Poly apparel to national and local on-air sports personalities and producers, invite them to games, and pitch stories to them. Also, always send in highlight footage to the local media. By building these relationships with the media and having stories air or print, Cal Poly Football's brand awareness will dramatically increase.

Social Media

Most importantly, Cal Poly Football should have its own Facebook and Twitter account. They currently have an Instagram account run by the coaches. Someone, not a member of the coaching staff, should run the social media accounts

for the program (see below for further details). Based upon the posting recommendations from Jordan Moore, Facebook should post one or twice a day, Twitter unlimited posts, and Instagram once or twice a day or more, as long as they are quality photos. The football program should have its own accounts independent of Cal Poly Athletics because our athletic program is not comparable to USC. They use the football team followers to gain interest for their other sports teams. We need to build our football fan base and the best way to do that would be to have football specific accounts.

Next, I would have Coach Walsh create a Twitter to have a social media presence. He should actively post to brand the program, himself, and the university. The head coach of any school's football team should be an icon on campus and everyone should know who he is. Here at Cal Poly, that is not the case. He needs to grow his brand, and in return, it will grow the program's brand.

The university's social media accounts (Cal Poly Athletics, Cal Poly Alumni, and Cal Poly) should constantly promote the individualized football social media on their pages. Once again, we are not a USC where the athletics helps out the university and alumni by sharing their posts.

The football program should use Spreecast as a means of both disseminating information and creating two-way communication between the program and its fans. A host and intern, or member of a public relations committee (see below for further details), would lead the Spreecast. Coaches, players, and even new signees could be on the Spreecast and interact with fans. This tool would be huge to draw fans and strengthen the program's brand.

Cal Poly Football should have its own YouTube page where they post highlight plays of games, videos of events with the team, or just fun videos of the players. These videos could be created and edited by a public relations intern.

The program should promote the players' social media profiles (Twitter and Instagram). This increases the brand of the program overall if individual players are well known and have their own following and fans. However, with promoting individual profiles, the players' Twitter and Instagram accounts must be screened by the coaches, sports information department, or public relations interns. This screening process would be necessary in order to keep the players' profiles appropriate.

The posts on all of the social media platforms should take the fan into a place where they would not normally have access. That is what draws in the viewer and engages them. The content must be something that they will not be able to get anywhere else.

Greek Relations

The relationship between Greek life and Cal Poly Football needs to change immediately. The hostility between Greeks and athletes is unacceptable. The Greeks are a huge untapped resource for the football program that needs to be utilized as soon as possible. In order to change the culture at Cal Poly, the coaches must begin the conversations. I recommend that they talk to the team about how important it is to support Greek life, and in return, they will support the team. When the players and the Greeks begin to respect each other, the culture will change.

Greeks love house competitions, and it would be a huge incentive to get them to come to games. Greek tailgate competitions should take place, as well as attendance competitions. Certain competitions could have a monetary incentive. For example, the winner of the best tailgate or the most attendees at a game would receive a \$500 donation for their house's philanthropy. Competitions would significantly incentivize the Greeks to attend games in more substantial numbers.

Another recommendation is to have pep rallies the night before the game. Bring out the band, the players, the coaches, and get everyone fired up for the game the next day. The current pep rallies during UU Hour are not effective; not many people go and the players/coaches rarely participate. If the pep rallies were in the evening, more people may go because young people like to do things at night. A DJ could be incorporated to bring some extra music and fun for the students.

A meeting should be held either weekly or bi-monthly with leaders of the Greek system and the coaching staff. They should talk to the Greek leaders about what is coming up, the opponents they will be facing, and have a two-way discussion about what could be done to get more students at games. By building a personal rapport with the students, the coaching staff would better brand Cal Poly and have a closer connection with the fans they want support from.

An event should be held during WOW Week between the all the Greek houses and the football program. There should be food and music, and all members of the team and coaching staff would attend. By interacting with the Greeks and building relationships with them, this could help break down the barriers and begin a culture change. Many of my friends in Greek Life have told me that if they had better

relationships with the football team or coaches, they would be much more incentivized to attend games and support the team.

Finally, every Greek house has a Public Relations Chairman. These PR Chairs should promote Greek events related to football on their social media pages to bring more positive attention to the football program.

Alumni Relations

I recommend that a newsletter, with written content, photos, and video, be emailed to all of the Cal Poly Alumni Associations bi-monthly. This will keep all of the Mustang alumni involved with the program and make them feel like they are included and still part of the Mustang Family. By actively including the alumni, it could potentially lead to monetary donations for the program.

The football program should also contact the Greek Alumni of each house. Example: "Dear Alumni of Lambda Chi Alpha...." The program should invite them out to games and update them on the season. They could even have an All Greek Alumni tailgate. I also recommend that general alumni tailgates be incorporated throughout the season.

Football Public Relations Committee

I propose that a Public Relations Committee be created to work specifically with the football program. Members of the Public Relations Committee would be Cal Poly PR students, who would be chosen based on previous work and an interview. They would be under the direction of an advisor, like Dr. Dan Eller and myself (Katie Ryan). The purpose of the committee would be to promote and continue to specifically brand specifically the Cal Poly Football program. These

students would have to be trustworthy because they will be behind the scenes of the program and always promote the program in a positive light and protect Cal Poly Football.

Members of this committee would run the social media outlets for the program. They would develop ways to promote to the campus, business communities, San Luis Obispo County, etc., as well as plan events to promote the program. The committee members would attend these events and post them on social media. They would be in charge of disseminating information to the media and the public that might normally not be presented from the Sports Information Department.

Conclusion

After completing this study, I have concluded that the implementation of a strategic branding plan could dramatically impact the public image, game attendance, fan loyalty, recruiting, and revenue streams related to Cal Poly Football, and the entire university. Overall, the goal of any branding campaign related to collegiate sports is to create a sense of community, while being a part of something bigger than yourself. We want to establish the same sense of community for the Mustang Family.

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Appendix A

Interview Transcript: Alex Horncliff

The following interview was conducted to obtain expert opinions from a member of Greek Life and as well as a student-athlete about building a relationship between the Greek community and the Cal Poly Football program.

Interviewer: Katie Ryan

Respondent: Alex Horncliff – member of Lambda Chi Alpha as well as a track and field athlete at California Polytechnic State University San Luis Obispo

Date of Interview: March 9, 2014

Interview:

Katie Ryan: What would you like to see in a relationship with the football team?

Alex Horncliff: Better trade off. We need a Greek interest in going to games for them, but then also athletics could give back to Greek life. There would have to be an incentive to incentivize Greek life to go, then we would go in much larger numbers.

KR: As a member of a Greek organization, as well as a student-athlete, how could the Greek system improve their relationship with the football team?

AH: As far as athletes go, they A. don't understand Greek life, or B. don't like Greek life. Their coaches always tell them, "Don't do it. Don't do it." So they get that in their head and they automatically assume that it's bad. They don't understand that it is almost the exact same thing as being on a sports team, but we don't have practices. It's almost entirely the same. I think it's a lack of understanding on each side's part. When we see them in social settings, we see different sides of them and they see different sides of us. I think one mutual thing that we both have is that we don't understand each other.

KR: What if leaders from the houses met with Coach Walsh or some players each week and talked about the games that week and how to get fans to attend?

AH: I think that would be a cool thing to do and I think the best way to do it would be to integrate it into IFC. IFC is our hub for getting information out. Some people will be really passionate about it and some people won't, but if you cast a wider net you get more fish.

KR: Because Greek organizations are on campus before school starts, what do you think about getting the fraternities and sororities to have an event with the football team during training camp? It could be after practice, dinner catered at the practice field with music? Talking and interacting with players and staff?

AH: That could work! Yeah, that would definitely work out.

KR: Do you think this would incentivize people to go?

AH: I think it could be. I think the biggest thing I see, is there needs to be a group of people in a house that are super passionate about sports and really want to go to the games and events. They are going to influence everyone around them to go. And once another house is beating them in sports attendance, it will be a rolling effect.

KR: So you think events would be the best?

AH: I think it's got to start with relationships and giving people the opportunity to meet each other. We need to break down those barriers because really, we're not that different.

KR: What kind of events would work?

AH: If we integrated events with a sorority and a fraternity like we talked about earlier. Or for example, they could do something where they gave an award to a fraternity and a sorority who had the best football attendance in the fall and they earned \$500 to a charity of their choice. With the competition, everyone would be like, "OK let's go to games and get rowdy!"

KR: How do we overcome the hostility between Greeks and athletes that is seen at Cal Poly?

AH: A lot of athletes come to Cal Poly and think frat parties and sports go together, and they think we are like other schools. They think, "This is a frat party and I'm an athlete, I should automatically get in." Poly isn't like that. Once again, I think it's just a lack of understanding on both sides.

KR: You mentioned competition earlier. What kind of competitions do you think would be fun?

AH: If you could encourage tailgate competitions, like who has the best tailgate and come up with criteria for it, or design the best tailgate set up. It could be anything, but competition is really the best way to get people involved.

KR: What do you think about fraternity and sorority PR Chairs using Greek social media to promote Greek events related to football?

AH: PR Chairs have the best reach to all of us, so that makes sense.

KR: What do you think we could do to get football players involved in Greek life?

AH: Talk to the coaches. There's not a specific way to get them out. Balancing both is difficult, but we have guys that do it. It's not easy because you have fraternity requirements and lots of things you want to do here, and then you have the exact same with athletics. If the coaches gave them the opportunity to try it out for themselves, maybe more of them would rush.

Appendix B

Interview Transcript: Samantha Coxe

The following interview was conducted to obtain expert opinions from a member of Greek Life and a campus leader about the relationship between the Greek community and the USC Football program.

Interviewer: Katie Ryan

Respondent: Samantha Coxe – member of Delta Gamma at the University of Southern California

Date of Interview: March 14, 2014

Interview:

Katie Ryan: How do you see the Greek system at USC interact with the Athletic Department and specifically the football team?

Samantha Coxe: In general, I feel that the USC Greek system is disconnected from the happenings of the USC Athletic Department. As a spirit leader, members of the Greek community rarely attended athletic events such as pep rallies before games or special announcements. However, the Greek community reveres the football team and I will often see football players involved in Greek events. I believe that the Greek system supports the football team.

KR: Do you think Greeks have a good relationship with the program?

SC: I believe that the Greek system has a good relationship with the football program in that the Greek system loyally attends football games.

KR: What ways does the athletic dept attempt to sustain a relationship with Greeks?

SC: I believe that there exists a disconnection in terms of information between the athletic department and Greek system.

KR: How do you personally feel a connection to your football team?

SC: I personally feel a connection to my football team through my experience as a spirit leader. Furthermore, attending the games increases school spirit.

KR: What do Greeks do during the week to promote or get ready for games?

SC: I believe that Greeks tend to set up for tailgating parties and pick out game-day gear to get ready for games.

KR: How do the Greeks tailgate?

SC: The Greeks tailgate by hosting parties at their fraternities and inviting specific sororities over to celebrate. Greeks usually tend to imbibe alcohol and play games with students, alumni, and parents.

KR: Do you have any interaction with the coaching staff?

SC: I do not have any interaction with the coaching staff. Our new head coach did attend a speaker event at Bovard 2 weeks ago and the students were so excited to hear him speak. I wish there was more of a connection between the coaches and the students.

KR: How do Greeks interact with the players?

SC: Greeks tend to be very supportive of the players. Many players are members of the Greek community. I have seen Greek members send good luck as well as congratulatory messages to various players.

KR: What do you think could be done better in the relationship between Greek life and the football team?

SC: I believe that Greek members would love to attend and participate in the pep rallies. If it would be feasible, a pep rally on the "Row" would be a great way to encourage Greeks to support the football team and Athletic Department. Furthermore, perhaps hosting a competition between the Greek chapters with who has the best attendance at a game and having the team or quarterback send a message to that house saying thanks would boost morale.

KR: What do you think about creating a mutually beneficial social media for Greeks and football?

SC: I think this is a great idea! I feel that our school is divided into Greeks, Non-Greeks, and athletes. I am not sure why it is this way, but I would love for the Athletic Department and the Greek system to foster a better relationship.

KR: Do your houses use their social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram) to promote games or activities in relation to football?

SC: Our house uses our social media platforms to show pictures of members going to games and in spirited attire.

Appendix C

Interview Transcript: Jordan Moore

The following interview was conducted to obtain expert opinions from a social media expert to obtain information on how to better brand Cal Poly Football via social media.

Interviewer: Katie Ryan

Respondent: Jordan Moore – Director of Social Media for the Athletic Department at the University of Southern California

Date of Interview: March 14, 2014

Interview:

Katie Ryan: How does social media help to build a strong brand for a football program?

Jordan Moore: I think there are several ways, for several things that social media touches these days. One is obviously the marketing aspect of it. From merchandise to ticket sales, to generally controlling the buzz and the interest around the team. It is significantly cheaper, to the point of being free. So if you're doing it well, you're not really even doing it. You're just the one lighting the fire, and everyone else is sort of marketing it for you, which is obviously the goal in the end. Then there's the other side, the public relations side, in terms of controlling the brand, it's all about controlling the message. And the biggest thing that's changed with social media is that they used to have to rely on reporters to break news for you. You'd have to send them a press release and took your quotes and your side of it. Now we break our own news. For example, we fired our coach last year and we were the first ones to report it. It wasn't until hours later that the media had anything to go on other than what we had. So that's really the biggest thing from a PR perspective.

KR: Some programs like Auburn have their own separate social media for each team. USC has Facebook and Instagram for the whole Athletic Department, and Twitter is individual. What do you think the difference between these two strategies are?

JM: That's a big discussion point we had long ago. We have a Twitter account for every single team except for football. We just have a Facebook page for athletics.

Although certain teams have their own Facebook pages, we don't do anything with those. Certain teams have their own Instagram accounts, but we don't really do anything official with those. Generally our philosophy, to answer your question, 90% of the people that identify as USC fans are really USC Football fans. While the content on the athletics' page, certainly disproportionately is skewed towards football, our goal is to lure them in with football and get them to like our pages because they like football and give them all the great football content, but when it comes time to help out women's basketball or women's lacrosse or men's volleyball, we have a large group that we can put those messages out to targeting, not all the time, but pulling in messaging that we'll have access to. So instead of the volleyball people talking to the same 2,000 die hard fans, they get access to the hundreds of thousands of fans that we have who identify as football fans, and we're trying to get them to be Trojan fans.

KR: How often do you post? What is your philosophy of disseminating information?

JM: It really depends on the social medium. On Facebook I never post more than twice in a day. So I would say once or twice a day on Facebook, probably only really five times a week. Very picky with Facebook with the way their algorithm works. You don't want to have dud posts on Facebook. You really want all of the Facebook posts to catch. It will punish you in the long run. Twitter, the more the merrier. I'd estimate five to 10 times a day. But on a game day, it's going to be 50 times. Instagram, I'd probably say once or twice a day. I think it's the more the merrier there too, it's just having the content to do anything relevant. How often do you have five photos you want to put up in a day? We have our blog too which we post five to seven times a day. I'd say those are the main ones. YouTube, obviously...We put up as many YouTube videos a possible. We're not really focused on YouTube subscribers. YouTube is really about storing our videos and being able to easily link to the other social mediums. So there's no number on YouTube videos.

KR: How important is it to have USC athletic social media be supported by the University' social media and Alumni Association's social media?

JM: I'd say not at all basically. We exist very separately from them. I have a relationship with both of those two people that you're talking about, but truth be told, our fan base is more rabid than theirs is. Our numbers are bigger than theirs are so they want more favors from me than the other way around. I try to not get too into what they're doing. For the most part it's separate. If the university has anything big going on, we're always happy to help. They tend to jump onto when we're doing big things too. But on a day to day basis, we don't really work with them.

KR: Are Spreecasts effective? Do they create more follows and interest because it is focused on fan interaction?

JM: We've been very successful. It's still in the experimental stage. I don't see a lot of people doing it and it's one of the cool things that we were one of the first people to do it. The numbers that we've gotten range anywhere from 5,000 views to about 60,000 views, the most people we've had. Which would be great for YouTube videos, so it certainly looks great for Spreecast. That's the only context we would have to compare it to is putting a video on YouTube. 60,000 views would be doing very well for a video we put on YouTube. One of the big things that they allow us to do is they are great for fan interaction and opportunity to sort of humanize when it comes to coaches or athletic directors or whoever is on there, the people get to know them. It's sort of that celebrity figure that they want to tap down and who they're always mad at, they get to ask them some questions and it sort of clears up a lot of issues. The other thing that I like about it is it has given us the opportunity to do things that we've never done before. One of the weaknesses that we have to deal with is that we can't get involved in any of the recruiting business. And it's become such a big business for all of these websites that are dedicated to football and men's basketball recruiting. The cool thing we can do now is that when these guys do sign, we can get them on and it's a way to interview them and to start marketing them. We did a signing day one for football and one for men's basketball too. That in itself was a cool thing and the fact a kid from high school can get on his laptop and can hop on and we can introduce him to the USC fans and really start the buzz for him almost a year out before he actually takes the court or the field for us.

KR: How big of an impact does USC's social media have as opposed to the local media?

JM: There's several different way to look at it. We have the numbers in our favor. I would say our numbers on Twitter are our best example, sort of where everyone is. Basically our numbers are ten times that of the beat guys that cover us. So obviously the numbers are in our favor, but still, we're always going to be the man, and people are not always going to want to get their news from the man because they know what we're giving is some version of news and some version of propaganda. They know that and we're going to be a lot more popular during popular time and the writers are going to be more popular during negative times because they are going to get the scoop that maybe we are not going to give. The writers definitely have that angle and that perceived objectivity, and that's something that we look to do too. We try to make our website and blog more objective so we're always fully covering ourselves. That's a strategy other teams take too. The LA Kings did that. They hired someone that was a beat writer for years, they just hired him to keep doing what he's doing but do it for the website. I know baseball does that too. There's a strategy to that. Obviously there can be a conflict of interest there in what you can cover and what you see. There's always going to be a need for those guys. We're not going to get rid of journalism. We have the platform with all of the followers we have to make something go a lot quicker than they can.

KR: Are the followers mostly alumni, students, or just fans?

JM: I think all of the above. I think it's very hard to tell. We do some work trying to figure it out. We don't do as much as maybe a big time corporation would do to really figure out who these people are. We definitely have analytics that we look at and try to figure it out. But a lot of it depends on the social medium. I spoke to a social media class that were almost your age the other day and I asked who was on Facebook and it was like 13 people. Two were on Facebook, not a single one of them had a Twitter account, and I think 11 out of the 13 had Instagram. It appears that Instagram is a lot of students. Twitter is made up of the junkies, the serious fans, the ones who want the news on injury updates and news every five seconds and the alumni are the ones that connect on Facebook, wanting to keep an eye on what their old school is doing.

KR: How important is it for the fans to get to know the players rather than just the team?

JM: That's an interesting thing. We definitely promote our players' social media accounts and want them to be able to build their brands and their individuality. The difference is we know they're not going to be here for very long. You try not to build your marketing campaign around individual players too much because if they're just coming for the players, then you're only going to get them for a year or two because that player is probably going to go pro. Whereas if I'm the Yankees and I want to sell Derek Jeter, I could do that for 20 years. That is obviously a big difference. We did promote Marqise Lee a lot last year, but he's gone now, so if he was the only reason you had to come to the Coliseum, why are you coming back next year? You really try to make your marketing campaigns about the brand and tradition and the identity of the team and the coach, obviously the coach is someone that you want to get involved in all of that, but you want to promote the individual players as much as you can, especially if they are successful and competing for awards and that brings glory back onto the department. When we've had Heisman campaigns that is something we are very involved in. That's really a focus in driving that campaign because social media is so important if we're trying to get a guy an All-American or a Biletnikoff. That's on our department to build that buzz and start that conversation. But in terms of selling tickets, you are trying to sell more than just that one player.

KR: How important is it that a head coach has a social media presence?

JM: It helps. No question because they are going to have a following and if they do have an strong social media presence, then for all the reasons I gave you before of why it's important to be on social media, the same applies to a coach being on social media. The only reason I would say you could work without it is if you have a coach that wins games and runs successful programs. Nothing is better than winning; the most important thing any coach can do is win. Certainly coaches that are accessible and open to new things, it can be extremely valuable, particularly in recruiting, as a means to connect with the next generation's players on a level that they understand and certainly in terms of selling the program. I think it's a super

bonus if they do it, but if you have an old legendary coach that doesn't want to do it, that doesn't necessarily mean you are in a bad spot.

KR: How do you, as the social media director, engage the fans?

JM: That's a really good question. I think the most effective way is pulling on the emotion of being a part of this community. At the end of the day, fans watch sports because they want to be a part of something and certainly in a university, when you actually are, it's one of the few times. If you like a pro team and if you say we, people make fun of you. But if you say we about being a part of a university, as a student or an alum, it makes sense and there is that sense of 'we'. No matter what the social medium, no matter what you're doing, the more that you can pull on that sense of community and in our case we call it, "Trojan Family", that's the stuff that really takes off. A sense of pride or nationalism or patriotism for USC as much as you can do that kind of stuff, that's the stuff that really gets people fired up.

KR: What are your recommendations to a program that is looking to use social media to increase fan base?

JM: It's going to depend obviously on who it is. In the case of a small school like yours, I would say there's several things you can do. You want to focus on interact and whether that's contests and getting people involved, or giving away things, that is sort of the first eye catching cheap trick that you can do on social media. But the stuff that people want to stick around for is the access. If you can give them an angle on what they already like, that they wouldn't see anywhere else is key. Whether its photos or videos, social media is driven by pictures and video now. As much as you can give them access to places behind the velvet rope that they cant go, that's what social media's about. Whether it's following a team or following celebrities, they want to see what's going on in the places that they can't get to. That's sort of the nuts and bolts of it, but there's other tricks along the way in terms of actually building numbers. But you know, numbers are overrated. What matters is how much you can get the people interested in your product and brand and how you can get them involved and engaged.

Appendix D

Interview Transcript: Randy Ryan

The following interview was conducted to obtain expert opinions from a member of the sports industry about branding Cal Poly Football and getting people excited about the program.

Interviewer: Katie Ryan

Respondent: Randy Ryan – Founder of the John R. Wooden Classic and sports entrepreneur

Date of Interview: March 14, 2014

Interview:

Katie Ryan: How did you brand your event and get people excited about the tournament?

Randy Ryan: The Wooden Classic was a made for television event to begin with; a media generated concept. It wasn't just to create a basketball event. It was less for the people that saw it live than it was for the global television and radio audience, because that's where so much of the money was. From that perspective, we had to create public awareness to generate television viewership, radio audience, and to attract people to buy tickets to attend the event. We had to generate what I call a compounding PR effect. We knew we were going to get media coverage. But how do we get the media so excited that they get each other excited which would create a compounding effect. We created a PR, advertising, and branding around the audiences. We were going to go global, so we were not only marketing in North America, but Asia and everywhere else. We wanted the media to get so excited that they would contact each other about the event. We created that kind of buzz. We wanted them to fight over interviews with myself or John Wooden or John Calipari. We promoted in different ways. We used press releases, basic PR 101. Then we would get a radio station to promote us every single day around the clock and gave them comped tickets to give away on air. They then wanted to host a show where they would interview me one day, then John Wooden another day. This all promoted ticket sales. Then we promoted to the local TV stations and Coach Wooden and myself would go. Then we did national nightly news at 7pm, from New York to LA. Dan Rather, Peter Jennings and Tom Brokaw, they did segments on us. The Friday night before the event, all three of them closed the nightly news talking about the Wooden Classic. That was a big deal because at that time, that was how everyone got their news because email and the Internet were not big. Then we

made a deal with the OC Register who wanted to be official sponsor. Instead of cash, we asked them to give us full-page ads in different sections: the front page, the sports section, the business section. We made a deal for a certain number of days so they would promote us, primarily driving ticket sales. For the local people that couldn't get tickets, it promoted watching the event on TV or listening to it on the radio. We did such a good job promoting this that we could have sold the arena out three times. The Pond of Anaheim holds 18,300 for basketball. It was the largest venue for basketball in the state of California. When our tickets went on sale at 10AM, we had the highest ticket price in the history of college basketball. The highest price at that time would have been for the Final Four that season. The NCAA's top price was \$60; mine was \$150. When the tickets went on sale at 10AM, all of the tickets were sold in seven minutes. Because of my event, the NCAA changed their ticket prices the following year.

KR: So what would your recommendations be for a school like Cal Poly, where it's a much smaller scale than your event.

RR: I would do the same sort of thing, on a regional basis and promote. It's changed a lot, because today, most people don't read a newspaper. I would create events like we did. I would create events that would bring attention to the program. I would create events leading up to the season, I would create events for spring football. I'd have meet and greets. I would invite the public, the high schools, the Pop Warner teams, the YMCA, the Boys and Girls Club, every organization that had youth. People can be 25 years old and go to a game and not have kids, but families are always looking for things to do. You have to make the football game the thing to do on a Saturday. What Poly has to do is reach out to these people. You should have the meet and greets in spring ball and in fall. Go out and encourage ways for the high schools to get involved. Get the fraternities and sororities involved. Create a sense of excitement that this is the place to be. Have special events with the fraternities and sororities. Reach out to San Luis Obispo County, reach out to the Alumni Association. They can create events that draw those people in. Create regular newsletters that go to the alumni via email. That's a way to foster excitement and would not only get them to attend events, but it could inspire them to make financial donations. They'd be more willing to do so if they felt connected to the program. There's a lot of alumni. Just imagine if you could get them to make a small donation of \$10 each, that could be close to a million dollars. Going back, I know it sounds very general, but I think the meet and greet thing is a big deal and a great way to keep them connected. You mentioned to me your idea of having student leaders in the Greek system meet with the coaches. Maybe have them meet once every couple of weeks to talk about who's hurt, what they're planning on doing differently with this opponent, make them feel connected. Get the fraternities and sororities to create events leading up to a game. There needs to be a better culture with Greeks and athletes up there. That begins with the coaching staff. They need to tell the players to encourage the Greeks to come to games. Part of teaching the young guys that come into the program that we support our Greek culture here and that they are important to us. You won't see that kind of hostility between Greeks and

athletes at other schools. They embrace the relationship at other schools. Like at USC for example, Greek life is a critically important part of what USC football is all about. It needs to be that way at Poly. It's a trickle down effect. Because so many people are a part of the Greek system, they will help support creating events to get the student body as a whole to come. That will make games more exciting.

KR: When I have spoken to some members of Greek life, they mentioned to me that infusing competition into these Greek events centered around football would be a good incentive to get people to participate.

RR: Yes, competition is always good. Maybe some sort of monetary incentive or having a letter or an email personally from Coach Walsh saying something like, "Congrats to ___ fraternity for having the best tailgate and destroying the competition. Keep it up and looking forward to seeing what you do next week." Make the Greeks feel engaged and feel that they matter to the program. Do something the night before as well. Texas A&M and Alabama have nighttime pep rallies before a game. Get the people thinking, "School is over for the week! Let's party and let's get up early and let's hit the game and hit it hard! We're going to be tailgating like maniacs!" Get the feeling started early that for 24 hours we are going to party hard for this football game. Right now, Cal Poly doesn't have that culture. There's no reason that Cal Poly can't do that. It's not something you do only once. This is an every home game thing. Have guys and girls meet with the coaches and players. Have the coaches and players talk about how much they need Greek support and appreciate it. Yes, it will be a culture change.

KR: What do you think Cal Poly can do to reach out to their Alumni rather than just hosting the Stampede Club dinners before the games?

RR: Well what I did in my event, I personally wrote to the alumni associations of UMass, UCLA, Kansas, and Kentucky every week. I told them what we were doing and what was new. It didn't matter what it was. I wrote a letter, and back then all we could do was fax, and I sent it to every president of each one of those chapters of each alumni association. I just told them what was new. Got so many great responses back from those letters saying, "Wow the President of the Wooden Classic is personally writing to us. Thanks so much for taking the time to contact us." I would start reaching out to them and tell them to come to games and inform them of what's going on. Here's another thing you could do. I assume there's databases for each of the sorority and fraternity alumni from Cal Poly? Start reaching out to them via Facebook or social media or email. Let them know that week what is new, how the game went the week before, who you're playing this week, what's coming up, and let them know that they are wanted at the game.

KR: Any other recommendations?

RR: You need to grab the audience that is right at your fingertips. Saturdays should be devoted to football. There are no other distractions. If you're in LA, kids are

going home, they're going to a Laker game, UCLA games, SC Games. In SLO, you don't have anything like that. Attack those people and let them know what's going on. Get people excited and make sure that momentum keeps rolling over week after week. It's about creating that culture.

Appendix E

Interview Transcript: John Eckel

The following interview was conducted to obtain opinions from a sports public relations expert on the best way to brand Cal Poly Football.

Interviewer: Katie Ryan

Respondent: John Eckel– Sports Public Relations Executive

Date of Interview: March 14, 2014

Interview:

Katie Ryan: What do you think is the best way to brand the Cal Poly Football team?

John Eckel: While branding Cal Poly Football is the ultimate objective, I would take this a step further and suggest that the branding and PR challenge is even broader. Any planning initiatives should be addressed in the broader context of the school itself to gain the academic institution nationwide awareness. Cal Poly sports program plans should be an extension of, consistent with and flow from the overall planning, objectives and initiatives of the overall university. By buying into this approach, all university leaders and brand ambassadors will be working collaboratively in the same direction, and delivering consistent messaging to the school's target audiences.

KR: So with that end goal in mind, what would be the objectives of the program plan?

JE: Well, of course increasing awareness, support and bottom line financial revenue of Cal Poly Football is number one. I think driving home and road game attendance and ticket sales is also important. Increasing social media following, participation and positive dialogue is necessary in order to keep the fans talking about the brand. I would work on increasing sponsorship support – both dollar revenue and media/marketing resources. Increase paid and in-kind media support like TV package of game coverage, live webcasts, and media co-sponsors. And lastly, positioning the team, coaching staff, star players and the overall university as good corporate citizens.

KR: Who do you see as being the target audiences of this campaign?

JE: To begin with, you would need to identify the geographic markets you are trying to outreach to. I would reach out on a national scale, as well as key regional and local markets for Cal Poly Football player recruiting and Cal Poly high school

student matriculation. I'd also incorporate major regional metro and media markets like San Francisco, Los Angeles, San Diego, Sacramento, etc. Now, as to who the target audiences are...there is a wide variety. I would focus on current players, alumni players and targeted recruits, families and friends of those players and recruits, the Cal Poly student base, the alumni and faculty, opinion leaders and decision makers, football and overall sports fans, and of course the media.

KR: Which media would you utilize to reach the target audience?

JE: In sports media, I'd reach out to the trade and consumer facets of that market. Sports Business Journal and Team Marketing Report would fall under the trade category, while ESPN, USA Today Sports, Sports Illustrated, Football News Weekly, local sports TV, radio, and print would all be consumer. I'd do the same for the business media as well with local newspapers, the LA Times, and LA Business Journal. Men's and youth lifestyle magazines would be another outlet, like Men's Health and Fitness, GQ, and SI for Kids. Reaching out to Cal Poly media partners, both current and prospective would be other outlets. Also credentialed game day media and sponsor partner trade media. Finally utilizing digital and social media like YouTube, FaceBook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, etc.

KR: What specific recommendations do you have for branding the program?

JE: You need to create the Cal Poly Football Ultimate Interactive Experience Event. Invite fans, alumni, students and former players, high schoolers/prospects, prospective sponsors, media partners, celebrities, former/current NFL stars/announcers, local opinion leaders and business CEO's and credentialed media to meet and compete in football fun day including flag football game and skills competitions which would be sponsored by sports equipment manufacturer or sporting goods chain. Have a training table luncheon, sponsored by food sponsor. Have picture opportunity sponsored by cell phone maker or camera manufacturer with video clips and pictures posted on YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter. Assuming Cal Poly Football will not be televised as part of a national TV media package anytime soon, we need to find a way to raise awareness of the program nationally. ESPN "SportsCenter" is the ultimate end game for any sports brand attempting to make its stamp on the national sports scene. Consider a media spokespersons meeting and ongoing dialogue like a Cal Poly Football newsletter and periodic outreach with ESPN SportsCenter producers in Bristol, ESPN Game Day producers and on-air personalities like Lee Corso, and invite them to attend/cover news, run footage of big rivalry game or games, package up and place post-game via satellite TV game footage for ESPN "Play of the Day"/"Play of the Week", etc. Always post great plays on YouTube. Package and send game highlight/great play footage to local sports TV producers. Also, send Cal Poly Football apparel to national and local on-air sports personalities and producers at key sports media and invite them to attend games, pitch them to run highlights, etc. Develop specific programming around marquee players and head coach to build their brands, and in turn Cal Poly's.

Figure 1

Figure 1.
Dual Carriage-Way Model

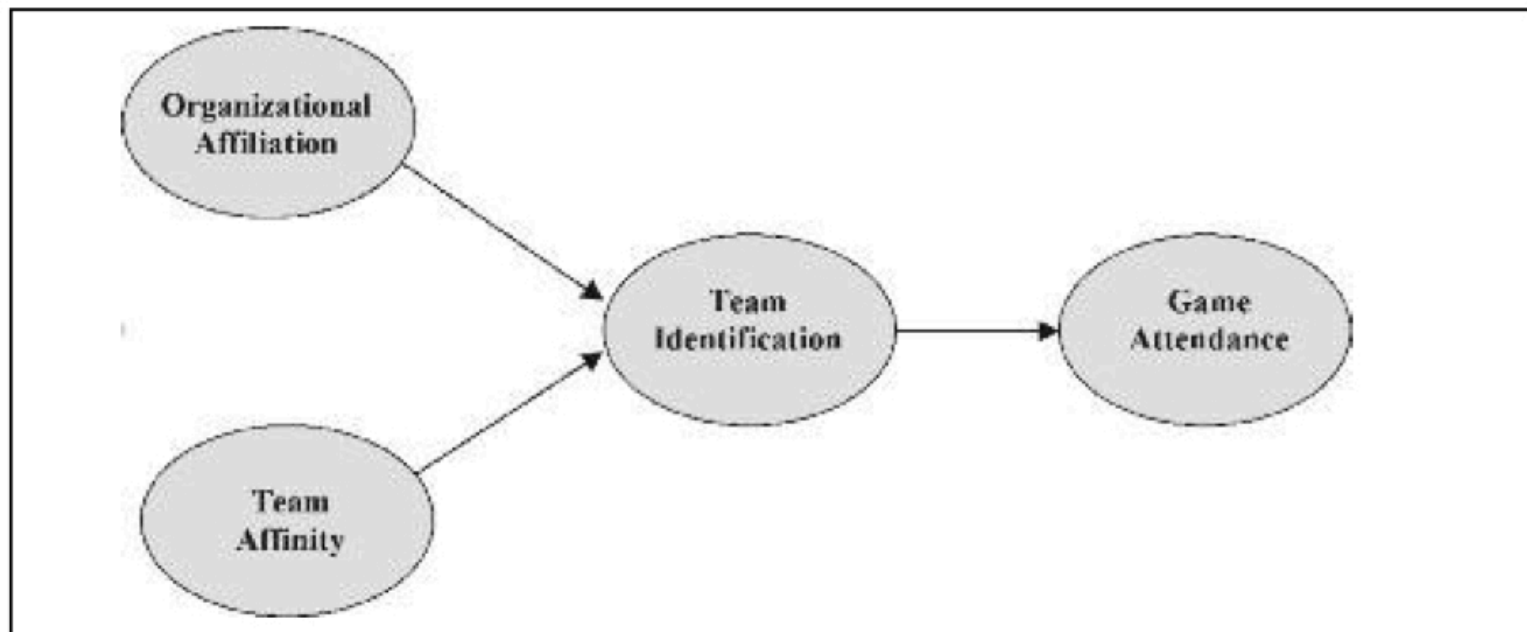


Figure 2

Table 5.
Framework of Motives in Ritual Commitment and Corresponding Strategic Sport Marketing Initiatives

Motivation	Key Insight	Specific Strategic Sport Marketing Initiatives
Involvement (Preparation/Participation)	Tailgating requires days, weeks and even months of stressful planning, just to enjoy a single day of stress free fun.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop products that simplify the planning process (e.g., tailgating kits) • Create a yearly promotional calendar (i.e., countdown to tailgating season) • Send electronic newsletter about tailgating throughout the year to fans (e.g., alumni, season ticket holders) • Interactive tailgating website to virtually recreate the tailgating experience • Provide text message number to allow tailgaters to send mobile photos of their tailgating experience
Social Interaction (Camaraderie/Competition)	Tailgating rivalry is all in good fun and serves to unite people while innately pitting them against one another.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organize contest between tailgaters of the same team with the prize being the "best" tailgating location on campus • Host on-site friendly competitions between tailgaters of opposing teams • Corporate sponsorship of a "Friends and Foes" tailgate for close rivalry matches (e.g., Georgia v. Florida; Michigan v. Ohio State)
Inter-Temporal Sentiment (Retrospection/Prospection)	Tailgating thrives on the intersection between the past and the future, between nostalgia and progression.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marketing promotions emphasizing historical basis of tailgating ritual • Create mentoring program—a big brother, big sister of tailgating—for veteran tailgaters to host current students at their tailgates • Create a website for fans to scan and upload past and current tailgating photos and memorable stories
Identity (Collectivism/Individualism)	Tailgating is a definitive part of the self-concept for those who see themselves as <i>true</i> fans in the larger sport fan community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create online interactive community of tailgaters (e.g., fans can post advice, stories, pictures) • Provide loyalty program, rewarding consistent tailgaters • Create competition (e.g., Most Valuable Tailgater) • Emphasize marketing of the universalism of tailgating