



# Theatrical Elements in Sports Marketing Campaigns

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## **Abstract**

This study investigated how theatrical aspects, such as storytelling and emotional appeal, are included into sports marketing efforts in order to establish long-lasting and meaningful connections with fans and consumers. The research dived into the immersive experiences that are built by these factors through the examination of real-world instances. It considered the function that these elements play in transcending traditional engagement and improving brand loyalty within the dynamic field of sports marketing.

## **1.0 Introduction**

The new marketing paradigm that has emerged as a result of the merging of sports and entertainment is one that has the power to hold an audience's interest well beyond the confines of the game itself. Advertising in the sports industry has progressed to the point that it is a full-fledged production, complete with dramatic aspects like storytelling and emotional appeal that leave a lasting impression on viewers. This transformation has reimagined how brands interact with their consumers, elevating the buying process to an indelible experience.

Brands are able to go beyond simple product advocates due to the incorporation of theatrical aspects into sports marketing initiatives. Storytelling, a fundamental part of human communication, is put to effective use in these campaigns to help brands create storylines that resonate deeply with their followers. By appealing to consumers' sentiments, businesses can capitalise on sports fans' already-strong emotional ties to their favourite teams and players to forge enduring bonds with those individuals who buy their products. This study sets out to investigate the interconnected nature of sports, advertising, and performance. The research aims to examine the ways in which sports marketing efforts create memorable experiences for spectators and buyers through the skilful use of narrative and emotive appeal.

## **2.0 Research aim**

The aim of this study is to investigate how theatrical elements, such as storytelling and emotional appeal, are used in sports marketing campaigns in order to create lasting and significant experiences for fans and consumers.

### 3.0 Research objectives

- To examine the role of storytelling in sports marketing campaigns
- To analyze the use of emotional appeal in sports marketing campaigns
- To investigate the role of theatrical elements in creating impactful experiences for fans and consumers.

### 4.0 Research question

- What is the role of storytelling in sports marketing campaigns?
- What is the role of emotional appeal in sports marketing campaigns?
- What is the role of theatrical elements in creating impactful experiences for fans and consumers?

### 5.0 Rational

The use of theatrical aspects in sports marketing campaigns is a captivating subject of study owing to its profound impact on the realms of marketing and sports. Historically, the field of marketing has predominantly emphasised the promotion of products, whereas the realm of sports has primarily revolved around athletic prowess (Heere *et al.* 2019). Nevertheless, contemporary consumers exhibit a desire for more than mere items; they seek immersive experiences, emotional engagement, and meaningful connections. The aforementioned transition has stimulated the development of sports marketing initiatives that extend beyond mere product placement, aiming to establish immersive storylines and forge emotional bonds with consumers (Desbordes and Richelieu, 2019).

In addition, the swift progression of digital media and technology has significantly broadened the scope and influence of sports marketing initiatives (Masteralexis and Hums, 2023). The advent of social media platforms, interactive material, and streaming services has effectively permitted instantaneous interaction with supporters, thereby cultivating a feeling of active involvement and communal belonging. The utilisation of theatrical aspects on these platforms effectively engages worldwide audiences, thereby optimising the opportunities for viral dissemination and fostering active participation from fans.

Nevertheless, the incorporation of dramatic components in sports marketing efforts poses specific obstacles. The delicate preservation of a balance between authenticity and commercialization is vital in order to prevent the alienation of supporters who highly regard the integrity of the sport (Winell *et al.* 2022). Furthermore, in light of the growing convergence between the sports and entertainment sectors, it is imperative to uphold ethical standards and prevent the exploitation of sportsmen and fans.

### 6.0 Significance

The significance of this research rests in its elucidation of how the introduction of theatrical elements into sports marketing adapts to meet the needs of a diverse audience. Understanding how to create immersive experiences help businesses connect with customers on a deeper level, boost engagement, and increase brand loyalty. This study contributes to the development of moral and effective campaigns by clarifying the fine line between genuineness and commercialization.

### 7.0 Literature Review

#### 7.1 The role of storytelling in sports marketing campaigns

In the domain of sports marketing efforts, storytelling has emerged as a formidable tool, helping brands form lasting bonds with their intended customers. In this examination of the relevant literature, it examines how telling stories have used to create successful sports content marketing campaigns. When compared to the status quo of

brand promotion, which emphasises features and benefits, storytelling is a radical departure (Kończak, 2021). It helps sports organisations communicate with fans in a consistent, meaningful way. This strategy goes beyond transactional engagement by immersing customers in a story, strengthening relationships beyond the monetary. Brand loyalty can be built due to storytelling's ability to not only inform but also evoke emotions (Tsai, 2020). Integrating stories about the product into marketing campaigns for sports can make even dry details more interesting to listen to. Customers are more likely to remain loyal if they feel emotionally invested in the brand. In addition, narratives can be used to humanise sports organisations by conveying the company's values, goals, and purpose to the target audience. Brands that put an emphasis on genuine connection with their customers stand out from others that are merely interested in making a profit due to this human-centred strategy (Pan and Phua, 2021). When compared to more conventional methods of brand recognition, storytelling serves to unify efforts under a single overarching theme. It makes sure that fans and customers get the same message across all channels, from social media to email marketing.

## **7.2 The use of emotional appeal in sports marketing campaigns**

Sports marketing initiatives that employ emotional appeal are examples of strategic strategy that aims to forge an intimate connection with their target audiences. This method acknowledges that sports fans frequently feel intense loyalty to and enthusiasm for their preferred teams, athletes, and sporting events (Tsai, 2020). Brands and marketers aim to develop memorable stories that resonate with consumers by appealing to their sense of wonder, nostalgia, community, and aspiration.

There are numerous aspects that the emotional appeal of sports marketing efforts can take. Stories of sportsmen overcoming obstacles, communities coming together over a shared passion for the game, and the exhilaration of a thrilling victory are all effective ways to convey this idea (Gano-Overway, 2023). These promotions aim to connect with consumers on a deeper level, creating a relationship that lasts beyond the first purchase. The emotional ties made by sports marketing efforts can go beyond monetary transactions, which is why they are so effective (Paek *et al.* 2021). When consumers establish an emotional connection with a brand, there is an increased likelihood of their sustained support for said brand. Moreover, promotional content that elicits emotional responses from individuals is inclined to be disseminated through online platforms.

However, a thorough comprehension of the audience's beliefs, goals, and emotions is essential for the effective use of emotional appeal in sports marketing initiatives. The authenticity of a campaign is crucial since fans can easily tell if it is an attempt to exploit them or if it is sincere (Mamo *et al.* 2022). Hence, it is of utmost significance to craft a narrative that effectively encapsulates the essence of sports and the fervour it evokes within its spectators.

## **7.3 The role of theatrical elements in creating impactful experiences for fans and consumers.**

The concept of theatrical aspects in sports marketing campaigns has become more significant in generating impactful fan and consumer experiences that beyond the conventional realm of spectatorship. The theatrical elements encompass a diverse array of strategies, including narrative structure, emotional expression, aesthetic considerations, and engagement with the audience. Storytelling serves as the fundamental foundation that underpins the narrative-driven nature of sports marketing (Tsai, 2020). Brands have the ability to establish an emotional connection with consumers through the development of narratives centred around their products, teams,

or events (Pan and Phua, 2021). This emotional connection stays with the brand and its consumers long after the promotional effort has ended.

One of the most important aspects of theatre is its ability to evoke strong feelings, and sports culture is full of passionate fans who are dedicated to their teams. These advertisements leave lasting impressions on consumers' minds by appealing to their feelings, such as happiness, nostalgia, or inspiration (Hameed *et al.* 2020). This deeper level of understanding and appreciation for the brand leads to increased levels of devotion and participation over time. Theatrical productions are amplified by their visual and design elements. Fans are further immersed in a multisensory experience that mimics the thrill of attending a live sporting event when they are treated to striking sights, fascinating movies, and attention-grabbing graphics. A powerful emotional response is generated by the integration of visual elements in this way.

Modern theatrical components are characterised by their emphasis on audience participation. Fans can become more involved in the action by using gamification, interactive contests, and user-generated content platforms (Kamada *et al.* 2022). By taking part, people feel more connected to the brand and the campaign as a whole, which boosts their enthusiasm and effectiveness.

#### **7.4 Theory**

Theatrical features in sports marketing campaigns can be better understood with the help of Social Identity Theory, which was introduced by Tajfel and Turner (1979) (Scheepers and Ellemers, 2019). When it comes to sports marketing, the social identities of supporters are inextricably intertwined with the brands of the clubs and sportsmen they support.

Theatrical qualities, such as storytelling and emotional appeal, have a strong impact on audiences because they speak to viewers' shared experiences. Fans' sense of belonging to a devoted community is strengthened by marketing efforts that speak to their core beliefs and motivations (Desbordes and Richelieu, 2019). Collective behaviours, such as sharing campaign content or participating in interactive events, are explained by this idea because they deepen the fan's connection to the group and the brand. The framework provided by Social Identity Theory allows the research to analyse how theatrical aspects work to create meaningful experiences for audiences and customers (Laffan, 2021).

#### **7.5 Literature gap**

There has been a lot written on the relative merits of emotional and intellectual appeals in marketing, but far less on how they perform in sports marketing. Since it is unclear how these appeals specifically affect sports consumers, more research into their effect is needed.

#### **7.6 Summary**

This chapter identified several theatrical aspects, such as storytelling and emotional appeal, which are increasingly being used in sports marketing campaigns, making formerly mundane interactions feel more like mini-productions. Fans and customers are more likely to remain loyal to the brand after experiencing these effects. There is, however, room for expansion in our knowledge of the distinct roles played by emotional and intellectual appeals in the context of sports marketing.

## 8.0 Methodology

### 8.1 Philosophy

#### Interpretivism

Interpretivism researcher philosophy is a method of inquiry that seeks to decipher people's individual interpretations and the larger social settings in which they occur (Van Leeuwen and Janssen, 2019). The researcher used interpretivism research philosophy in this research. The researcher used an interpretivism approach to the study of sports marketing, focusing on how the combination of theatrical aspects (storytelling, emotional appeal) creates powerful, unforgettable fan and consumer experiences.

### 8.2 Design

#### Explanatory

The term "explanatory design" is used to describe a research strategy that combines qualitative and quantitative data with the aim of elucidating links between variables, deepening understanding, and providing causal explanations (Sileyew, 2019). The researcher used an explanatory research design in this research. Taking a causal-explanatory approach, the researcher examined how sports marketing uses theatrical characteristics (storytelling, emotional appeal) to create memorable experiences for fans and consumers.

### 8.3 Approaches

#### Deductive

The concept of deductive approaches begins with the help of the formulation of hypotheses grounded in previously made theories as well as then moves on to the collection and analysis of several data to support or disprove those research objects (Mainde *et al.* 2021). The researcher used deductive research in this methodology. This researcher followed deductive methods to examine hypotheses based on how sports marketing uses several types of theatrical elements (storytelling, and emotional appeal) to make powerful, long-lasting experiences for fans and consumers.

### 8.4 Data collection

Data collection defines the approaches engaged in collecting information (Van Leeuwen and Janssen, 2019). There are two types of data collection such as Primary and secondary. In this research methodology, the researcher used a secondary data collection method. Secondary data collection is sifting through and making conclusions from data that has already been collected, analysed, and made available to the public in the form of studies, papers, or online databases (Newman *et al.* 2020). In addition, The researcher also employed thematic data analysis to examine information from a variety of sources.

## 9.0 Findings and Discussion

### 9.1 The role of storytelling in sports marketing campaigns

The incorporation of narrative techniques in sports marketing campaigns is a dynamic and influential strategy that surpasses conventional advertising strategies. This methodology entails the development of narratives that elicit a deep emotional connection with audiences. For instance, narrative effectively uses the power of emotions to develop connections that transcend mere involvement. The Nike advertisement titled "Dream Crazier" exemplifies the brand's depiction of female athletes who intentionally defy dominant cultural norms (Binlot, 2019). Through the strategic use of personal narratives, the advertisement adeptly evokes emotional reactions,

including sentiments of empowerment and camaraderie, thereby fostering a communal perception of shared experiences within its target audience.

By utilising the narrative technique, brands may proficiently communicate their fundamental principles, purpose, and authentic identity in a way that deeply connects with their target demographic. The "Create the Answer" campaign implemented by Adidas employs the narrative of Derrick Rose's individual journey as a means to exemplify the brand's commitment to nurturing the growth and progress of athletes (Thedrum.com, 2018). This narrative provides a correlation between the individual narrative and the larger principles of the brand, so fostering a more profound sense of affiliation.

Narratives have long-lasting impacts on the preservation of memories and the attitudes of customers. "The Boy Who Learned to Fly" is a promotional movie created by Gatorade that uses animation as a visual medium to portray the ascent of Michael Jordan. This artistic choice evokes a feeling of nostalgia and underscores the substantial role played by Gatorade in enabling athletes to achieve their goals (Clios.com, 2023). The enduring quality of this memory possesses the capacity to significantly influence consumers' choice of brands.

## **9.2 The use of emotional appeal in sports marketing campaigns**

The utilisation of emotional appeal is a highly effective method implemented in sports marketing campaigns with the aim of establishing profound relationships with target audiences. This methodology effectively engages the enthusiastic dedication of fans, constructing compelling storylines that elicit profound emotional responses. There are two notable cases that highlight the effectiveness of this phenomenon. For example, Dove's "#MyBeautyMySay" campaign, in conjunction with former gymnast Shawn Johnson East, showcases the multifaceted nature of emotional appeal, although not adhering to the conventional sports marketing format (Cosmeticsbusiness.com, 2016). The campaign effectively connects with individuals who have undergone similar transformations by recounting Johnson's trajectory from being an Olympic athlete to accepting her physical changes post-athletic career. The genuineness and relatability of the subject matter foster an emotional connection that transcends the confines of the sports domain.

Procter & Gamble's "Thank You, Mom" campaign centres around the Olympic Games and depicts the various sacrifices that moms make in order to provide unwavering support for their athletes' endeavours (Olympics.com, 2017). The emotional narrative presented in this piece establishes a profound connection with the audience, resonating deeply on an individual level. It effectively explores the universal issue of unwavering maternal commitment. The campaign effectively appeals to both individuals with a keen interest in sports as well as a wider demographic, so demonstrating the extensive influence of emotional appeal.

## **9.3 The role of theatrical elements in creating impactful experiences for fans and consumers.**

Theatrical aspects are becoming an increasingly significant part of sports marketing initiatives because they create experiences that are unforgettable for fans and consumers and go beyond the act of plain spectatorship. By fusing narrative, emotion, aesthetics, and the participation of their customers, brands are able to create experiences that are unforgettable. The "Dream Crazier" campaign that Nike ran was successful in connecting with viewers on an

emotional level because it used narratives to inspire and motivate female athletes to pursue their dreams (Binlot, 2019).

The potential of theatre to evoke strong feelings in its audience members makes it an extremely potent tool for reaching out to an audience that is emotionally committed to a particular sport. It has been demonstrated that advertising that is reminiscent of the past, such as Gatorade's "Be Like Mike" campaign, improves brand loyalty (Sportsbusinessjournal.com, 2023). Theatrical experiences are enriched by visual aesthetics, such as those seen in Under Armour's "Rule Yourself" campaign. Multisensory experiences similar to those at live athletic events are created by the visual and design aspects (Exploresportsmanagement.com, 2020).

## 10.0 Conclusion

The integration of theatrical components into sports marketing campaigns has brought about a significant transformation in the manner in which businesses interact with supporters and consumers. Through the utilisation of various strategies such as storytelling, emotional appeal, visual elements, and active engagement, brands are able to create immersive experiences that go beyond simply the promotion of their products. Prominent advertising campaigns such as Nike's "Dream Crazier" exemplify the efficacy of narratives in effectively engaging a wide range of consumers, hence cultivating emotional affiliations.

The powerful emotional impact of theatrical aspects, as exemplified by Gatorade's nostalgic advertisement "Be Like Mike," serves to reinforce their significant significance in accessing the fervour inherent in sports culture. The utilisation of visual aesthetics in advertising campaigns, such as Under Armour's "Rule Yourself," serves as a prime illustration of how the incorporation of captivating images augments the sensory encounter and fosters increased involvement. Furthermore, current marketing initiatives that prioritise audience engagement, such as Adidas' "Create the Answer", underscore the capacity of interactive experiences to cultivate long-lasting brand allegiance and foster active consumer participation. The integration of these components enhances sports marketing efforts, transforming them into immersive narratives that leave a lasting impact on consumers, both emotionally and mentally, even after their completion.

The significance of this strategy resides in its ability to generate memorable and influential experiences that beyond conventional advertising methods. In the ever-changing landscape of the sports sector, the integration of theatrical aspects remains a vital approach for companies to cultivate genuine connections, cultivate loyalty, and leave enduring impressions on fans and consumers.

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