

COLUMNS

Effect of time and location on sports fan engagement using mobile

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By **John McCauley**

Can the native mobile platform become the best concierge you have ever known? We believe it will.

Since digital media platforms have come into existence, sports brands have used them as mechanisms to shout to their audience. This has resulted in a megaphone for teams and leagues to tell their stories. The conversation has essentially been a one-way experience where teams would hope that fans would find them.

With the onset of social media and more location-based tools, fans have garnered a relationship with the brands they love, whether it is the New York Jets, Toronto Maple Leafs or Starbucks. There is an expectation by the loyal fan or consumer to be treated well and to be heard.

Fan built

As the mobile platform alphas integrated more digital experimented technology over the years, it has amplified the fan relationship to the point where it is integral to driving engagement and growing the audiences.

The mobile phone is the one device that is in your pocket 24/7 and can collect the most data about the individual. It is also the one device that can make decisions based on your time and location.

We are at a point now where the center of your fan engagement strategy has to come from the mobile phone because it ties all of the different components together: growing an audience, collecting data and giving brands the opportunity to monetize.

The next phase of these applications will be about making sure the appropriate applicable features bubble to the top for fans, based on whether they are in-stadium for a live event or sitting on the couch watching that live event.

Regardless, there are several valuable assets that are different and important to each individual fan.

Those items that we intend on delivering to a fan are based on their time and location, not based on someone's ability or inability to find a feature in a mobile application. We envision those features to reach out, grab you and bring you in.

Whether we are talking about seat upgrades, in-seat ordering or even finding the way back to the car, those things resonate with fans when attending the live event.

For those taking the game in from the comfort of their own home, the content, video, replays, gaming and social conversation are important to those fans. The native mobile platform is the best resource to bring those things to life, when aggregated together.

Going native

You will never really replace the ability to ask a real person a question while at a live event.

If mobile data is harnessed though, you will know based on your patterns and the data collected on your previous visits what your most likely experiential scenarios are.

For example, if the mobile app knows that you always park in a certain garage when attending a game, it could push a message to your phone offering other options or recommendations for parking. That is one of many simple examples of the value-add the sports industry needs to provide to customers.

This centralized method gives the brand a 360-degree view of the fan and it can then proactively look for opportunities to provide better services.

Whether it is for a season ticket holder, member of a loyalty program or first-time fan, the aggregated platform will enable a memorable experience to all parties.

Think about how many times during the season a fan of a team has to search to find out where the broadcast of the game will be.

If we know more about the individual's needs and preferences, the team can provide the right information to the person's experience at the right time to solve a problem for them.

At the heart of it, we are solving problems for the consumer or fan and creating little wins that make up a memorable experience.

The best way to make sure your fans have a great experience is to provide those services and in doing so you are creating more opportunities for sponsorship. This ensures that there is a clear tie between the experience you are providing and the sponsor that is bringing it to you.

THE SPORTS BUSINESS has made some positive strides in this space over the last 12 months to 24 months, but we are just at the cusp of what it can become.

The good news is that there are a myriad of features out there that can make your life easier. But the bad news is that there is not one place yet for a fan to go to get them all. The native mobile platform is poised to fill that role.

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