

Module 2. Access to Content - Giving fans better live and virtual experiences

Introduction

In the previous module of this course, we discussed the very important need of some companies to build brand awareness through sponsorships. This strategy is usually adopted by new brands or brands aspiring to expand their geographic scope. They see sponsorships as a shortcut to achieve their business objectives faster, cheaper, and better.

Over the years, for the brands that successfully manage to become more recognized and popular with their consumers, awareness starts to become less important. At some point in their history, when enough people are aware of its brand name, its function(s) and points of difference, the marketer's task of building awareness becomes secondary.

The same pattern happens in our personal relationships. We come across many new people in our everyday lives. Most of them will be forgotten minutes later. Some, after a few interactions, might become acquaintances. This is where brands that successfully build awareness reach this level of relationship with consumers.

But for those very few people (and brands) that become better than "known", there is a whole different relationship status. They become friends! This is brand management's nirvana.

As much as friends, these are brands that are now part of our lives. We need them around, we miss them when they are gone for too long, they are hard to be replaced, we forgive their mistakes easily, and our lives are better when they are around.

To make a relationship with our friends work, we need to engage with them. We need frequent conversations, dialogues and shared experiences. When brands are well-known, this is exactly what they try to offer to their consumers. This level of engagement and interaction cannot be achieved by the awareness strategies described earlier. They need completely different tools to continue to develop their relationships with consumers.

Luckily, this is also something that sports can provide like no other consumer passion.

Engagement can be achieved by providing value to the fans and consumers. Each kind of fan sees value in a different way. For some, access to events is the most desirable one; for



others, a direct relationship with the stars or a first look at the news. But for most people, the best form of value is content.

Being “in-the-known” makes fans feel more powerful, more in control, more connected to their passion. When they have content, they are more respected by their peers and may even become a reference among their groups, giving them social status.

Content also has the benefit of being scalable. Thanks to the digital tools available for brands today (websites, social media platforms, mass communication chat tools, podcasts, newsletters, etc.), the content distribution is almost cost-free and effortless.

In a world where brands are less and less relevant in our lives, they desperately need to present themselves with interesting and engaging content, to be noticed. This is the perfect space for sports’ content, as it allows the brands to tell their stories tapping into their consumers' passion points.

Today, when established brands think about sponsorships, the content is at the top of their assets’ needs.

This explains why every football club, league, athlete, youtuber or influencer is seeing himself/herself as a content creator, the best rightsholder understood and invested to become a partner that not only has a great intellectual property but is also capable of doing great things with it.

In this module, we will look at the different sources of content that brands can use to develop their campaigns. We will then look at a few examples of recent sponsorships (in sports and entertainment) in which access to content played an important role for the company.



Figure 1: New Olympic motto ad in Olympics' Instagram profile



Retrieved 2021 from URL. Screenshot by author.

Content Developed by Leagues

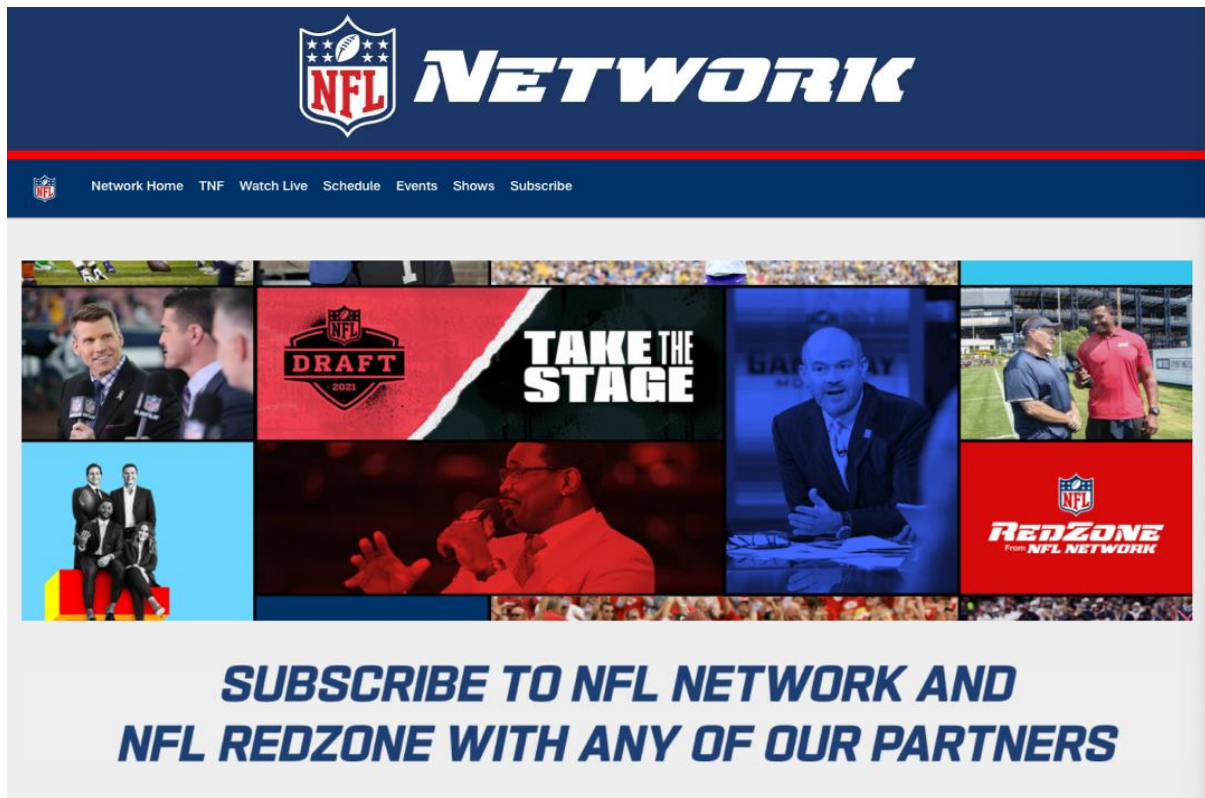
1.1. NFL Network

The NFL is the most successful league in the history of the United States. Its reach and popularity dwarf every other sport in the country and most of the global sports bodies. No matter how you look at it, nothing comes close to American Football. Some people look at "the Big 3 Sports" (American football, basketball and baseball), others at the "Big 4" (if

you include ice hockey), some even at the Big 5 (if you include football/soccer). But the truth is that there is only a Big 1 and then, there's everything else.

As one of the sports leading organizations in the world, the NFL realized the need and the opportunity to create an independent arm dedicated to content developed nearly 20 years ago.

Figure 2: NFL Network's Home page



Retrieved 2021 from <https://www.nfl.com/network/>. Screenshot by author.

NFL Network was launched on November 4, 2003, only eight months after the owners of the league's 32 teams voted unanimously to approve its formation. The league invested \$100 million to fund the network's operations. NFL Films, which produces commercials, television programs, and feature films for the NFL, is a key supplier of NFL Network's programming, with more than 4,000 hours of footage available in its library. As a result, much of the network's highlights and recaps feature NFL Films' trademark style of slow-motion game action, sounds of the game, and sideline conversations between players and/or team staff. (NFL Network, 2021, para. 3)

At the beginning of season 2006, the network started to broadcast 8 regular-season NFL games on Thursdays' prime time, called "Thursday Night Football". Not only has the network provided live games, but also broadcast the NFL Draft, since 2006. Nowadays, its coverage competes against the ones provided by ESPN and ESPN2 in the United States.

According to their own website (NFL Network),

The NFL Network is the only channel dedicated to NFL fans, with programming on 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, all year round! NFL Network has exclusive live games, Thursday Night Football, in-depth fantasy insight, breaking news & NFL original programming. NFL Network is the main source for NFL news & analysis, hosted by football experts and Hall of Fame talent. (About NFL Network and NFL RedZone, 2020, para. 1)

By creating the NFL Network (NFLN), the League took a much stronger position in the content development and distribution of its product. Today, part of the broadcasting revenues (accounting for more than half of the NFL's total revenues or approximately US\$ 15 billion / year) comes from the NFLN content licensing and broadcasting.

NFL sponsors usually need to commit a certain share of their overall investments in the league in advertising at the NFLN. From a US\$100 million sponsorship contract, for example, a sponsor would need to place US\$20 million in advertising in the NFLN (generic numbers, for the sake of give an example only). That means that a contract that would be worth US\$80 million (should the NFLN did not exist) is now worth US\$100 million thanks to the content provided to sponsors through their own network. The NFL content capability allowed them to increase their prices (on this example) by 25%. Not a bad return on investment for this initiative.

1.2. IOC's Olympic Channel:

The International Olympic Committee has been a pioneer in content for decades.

Tired of building, tearing down and then rebuilding all over again all the broadcasting infrastructure of the Olympic Games every two years (for Summer and Winter Games) and with the inconsistency that the Olympic brand was being displayed to its worldwide audience, in 2001, the International Olympic Committee decided to create the Olympic Broadcasting Services (OBS).

The OBS produces the live television, radio and digital coverage of the Olympic and Paralympic Games. Our coverage is neutral, favoring no particular country or athlete, and



includes sports competitions as well as the Opening and Closing Ceremonies. (Company overview, n.d.)

The International Olympic Committee established OBS to serve as the permanent host broadcaster for the Games, eliminating the need to continually rebuild the broadcast operation for each edition, and as a result create a more efficient, streamlined operation. (Company overview, n.d.)

Figure 3: OBS members working from their devices



From *Company overview*. OBS. <https://www.obs.tv/organisation>

To learn more about the complex operations of OBS, watch the video from the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Summer Olympic Games available in <https://bit.ly/3wTlIcu>.

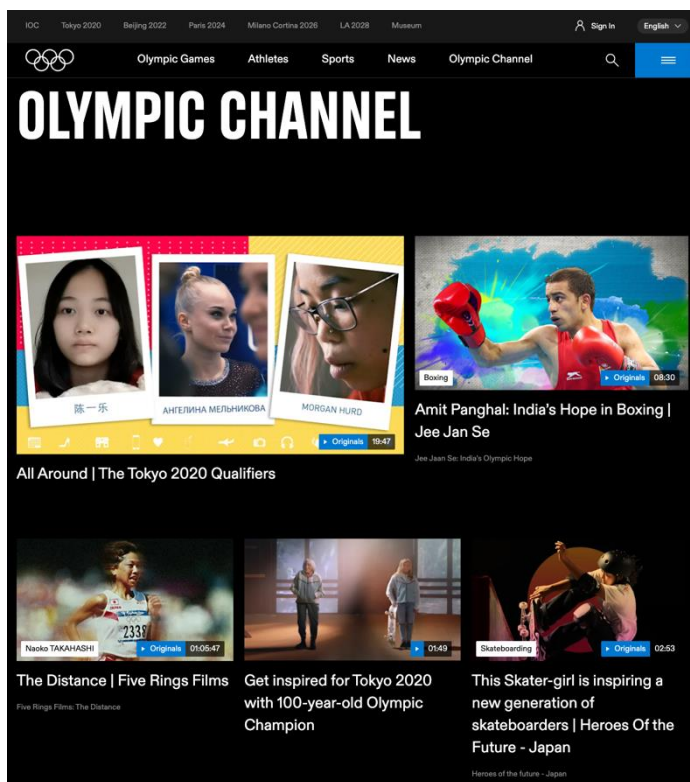
Fifteen years after the inauguration of the OBS, the International Olympic Committee took another important step towards becoming a real publisher of content: the creation of the Olympic Channel.

“The Olympic Channel is a multi-platform global media destination where fans can discover, engage and share in the power of sport and the excitement of the Olympic Games all year round” (Where The Games Never End, n.d., para. 1). Offering original programming, news, live sports events and highlights, the Olympic Channel provides additional exposure for sports and athletes 24 hours a day, 365 days a year in 12 languages. The Olympic Channel was launched in August 2016 in support of the IOC’s goal, set out in Olympic Agenda 2020, of providing a new way to engage younger generations, fans and new audiences with the Olympic Movement. Founding Partners supporting the Olympic Channel are worldwide TOP partners Bridgestone, Toyota and Alibaba.

The primary objectives of the Olympic Channel are the following:

- Provide a platform for the continuous exposure of Olympic sports and athletes beyond the Olympic Games period and help create anticipation while providing opportunities to “re-live the experience” after the Games.
- Continuously highlight the relevance of the Olympic Movement’s ideals to the challenges of today’s world.
- Provide a platform for sharing the IOC’s very rich patrimonial assets and archives with the world and create additional value and content for the IOC archives.
- As a matter of priority, engage the young generations around the world using methods that are relevant to them, building understanding, entertainment and education.

Figure 4: Olympic channel



Screenshot generated by author.

Since its launch, the Olympic Channel has produced incredible content in the form of original series. It has broadcasted events from the IOC and International Federations, achieved global distribution on TV through the IOC broadcasting partners and built a home for the Olympic sports every day of the year.

It hasn't been an easy path, and many sponsors were skeptical of its potential in the early days. But the IOC's persistence paid back, and today they are in an excellent position to

take advantage of the increased value of sports content that sponsors are demanding from their rights holders partners.

Recently, the Olympic Channel merged with the Olympics.com website to create a central hub for all things Olympics.

1. NBA TV

When it comes to innovation, no other league beats the NBA. The National Basketball Association has been a pioneer in many areas of the business of sports thanks to the leadership of its iconic Commissioner David Stern (1984 to 2014) and his successor Adam Silver (2014– current), and media couldn't be an exception to their rule. In 1999, the league launched nba.com TV, renamed NBA TV in 2003.

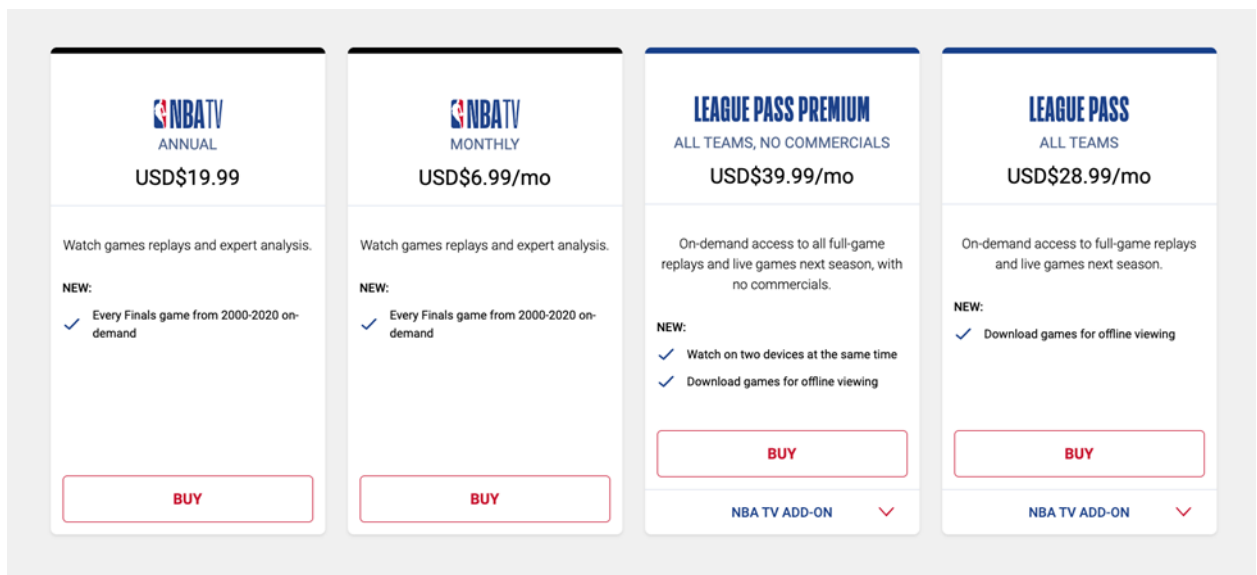
NBA TV is a pay television network owned by the National Basketball Association (NBA) and operated by Turner Sports.

Dedicated to basketball, the network features exhibition, regular season and playoff game broadcasts from the NBA and related professional basketball leagues, as well as NBA-related content including analysis programs, specials, and documentaries. (NBA TV, n.d., para. 1)

The network mainly launched with two purposes; to serve as a barker channel for the league's out-of-market sports package NBA League Pass, along with featuring statistical and scoring information which was more easily accessible in the pre-broadband age, and it featured mainly archival content from the NBA Entertainment archives in its upper pane to fill programming time. As time went on, the network added more programming, including international basketball leagues and programming from FIBA usually unseen in the American market. (NBA TV explained, n.d., para. 4)



Figure 5: NBA TV Packages



Retrieved from <https://watch.nba.com>. Screenshot by author.

Unlike other leagues, the NBA delegates the production and distribution of the content to their broadcasting partners Turner Sports and WarnerMedia News & Sports. There are multiple media packages sold direct-to-consumers.

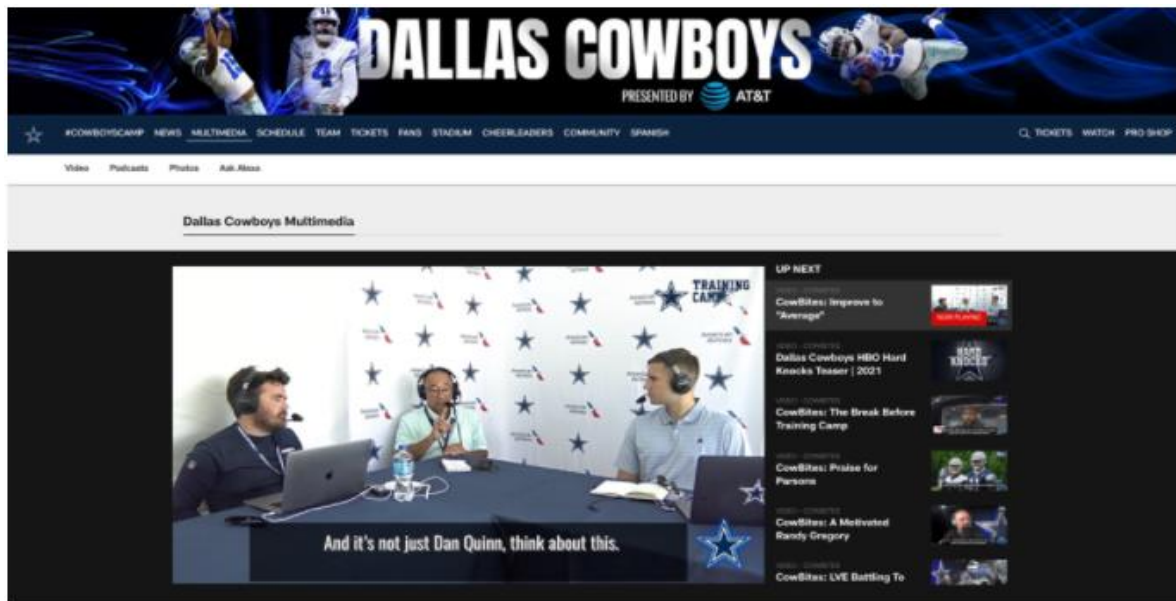
Clubs & Franchises:

2.1 Dallas Cowboys

The most famous franchise in the most famous league is another good example of content creation. In this case, fans get everything they need from the Cowboys on their website. Being a rich organization (revenues in 2020, according to Forbes, of U\$980 million), it is expected they would be investing properly to develop their owned content.



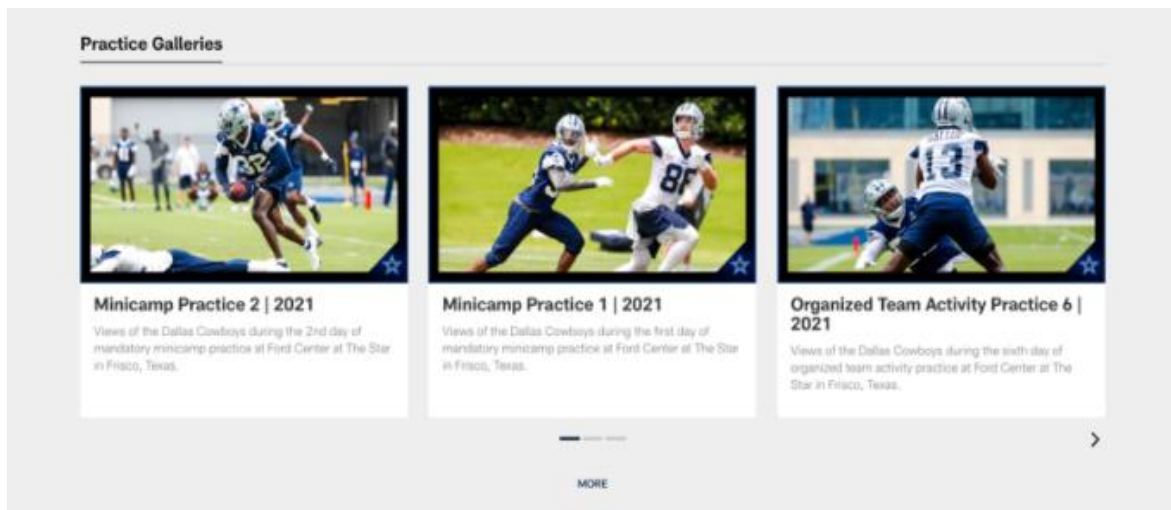
Figure 6: Dallas Cowboys Home page.



Retrieved 2021 from <https://www.dallascowboys.com/> Screenshot by author.

The areas of focus for the Dallas Cowboys are team images, podcast and select videos. Being part of the NFL, they benefit from the more sophisticated content creation that the league is developing for all their franchises.

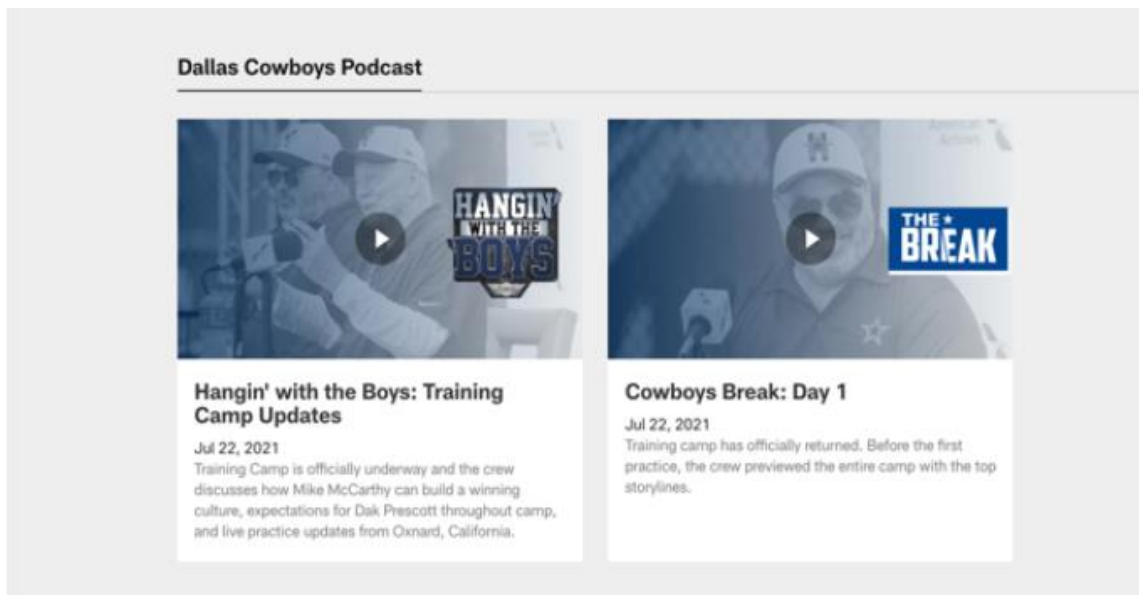
Figure 7: Dallas Cowboys Practice Galleries section.



Retrieved 2021 from <https://www.dallascowboys.com/photos/> Screenshot by author.



Figure 8: Dallas Cowboys Podcast section



Retrieved 2021 from <https://www.dallascowboys.com/photos/> Screenshot by author.

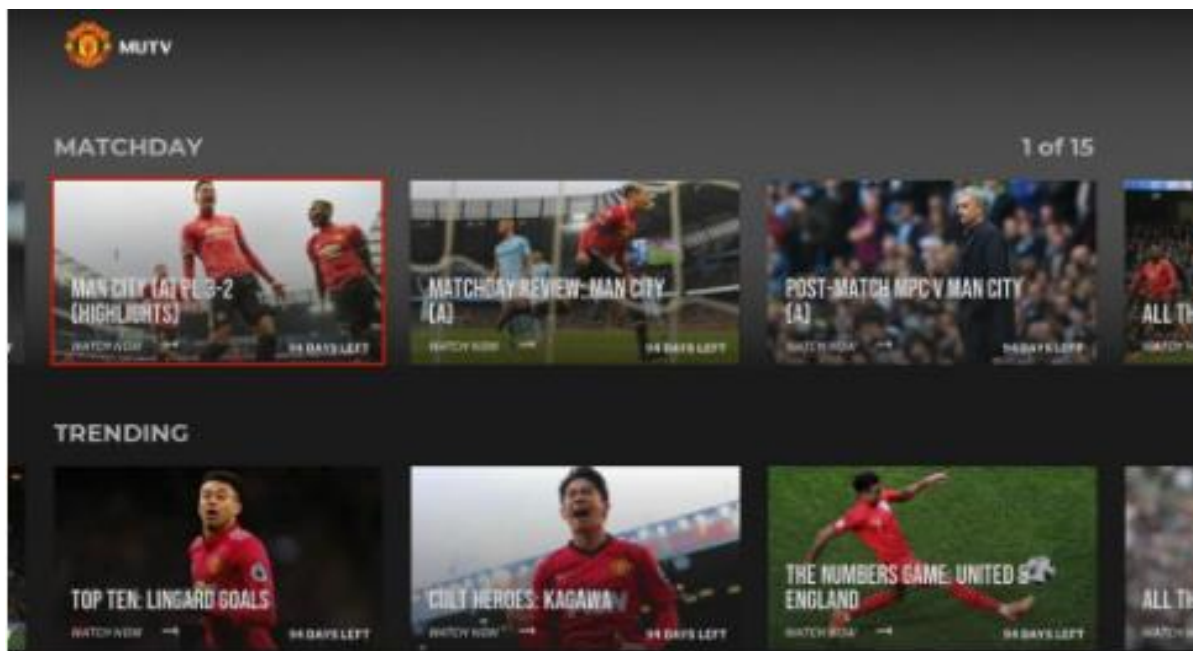
2.2 Manchester United TV

As one of the top 3 most valuable clubs in the world and a leader in marketing, Manchester United has been one of the most active clubs in content development for over two decades. That, in part, explains the extraordinary success it has achieved over the years recruiting fans all around the world.

MUTV (Manchester United Television) is a premium television channel which is both owned and operated by the club. The channel's first broadcasting took place on 10 September 1998.

This TV channel provides Manchester United fans access to exclusive interviews to players and the team staff, live reserve and academy games, full matches (including all Premier League games), news about football, "classic" matches, among other themed programming. The channel also broadcasts live for all of the team's friendly matches part of the pre-season (including International Champions Cup).

Figure 9: MUTV Home page



Retrieved 2021 from <https://mutv.manutd.com/home> Screenshot by author.

2.3 FC Barcelona

Another excellent example of a club as a content publisher is FC Barcelona. The Barça TV offers fans an incredible assortment of original films about the club, current and past coaches' and players' profiles, press conferences, full matches replays and highlights, and much more.

Figure 10: Barca TV logo



From Barça TV+, la nueva plataforma streaming del FC Barcelona, 2020. DPL News. <https://digitalpolicylaw.com/barca-tv-nueva-plataforma-streaming-del-fc-barcelona/>

The packages for online subscription start at under 40 Euros.

But while the main beneficiaries of this offer seem to be the fans, the reality is that it benefits equally (if not more) the club sponsors.



By creating this volume of material, it is possible to have unique and exclusive content to every sponsor of the club. This is what makes a sponsorship proposal more appealing to the brands looking at storytelling and exclusivity.

A brand whose positioning is anchored in “tradition” (this is the case for some fashion brands, spirits, travel, etc.), for example, can easily sign a contract with Barcelona focused on their archive of great players that have worn their shirt over the decades.

3.1 Athletes

Influencers are content creators in their own way. They capture their own lives in film and photos and share with their followers, who are interested in being in the know of all they do.

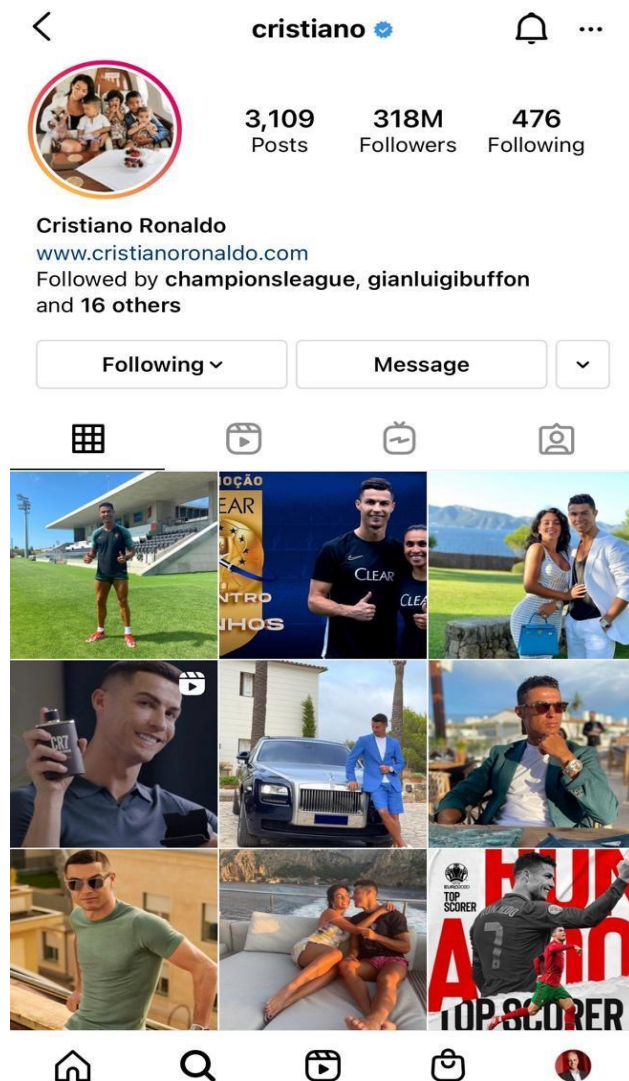
This audience allows them to become media platforms, advertising products and services and being paid for that. The more followers, the more they can charge the brands

In the world of player influencers, no one does it better than Cristiano Ronaldo. In addition to being an exceptional football player, Cristiano Ronaldo is also a publishing powerhouse. More than any other player, he mastered the art of advertising and the proper use of social media platforms. The results are paying back big time in the number of followers and businesses.

On Instagram alone, at the time of this writing, CR7 had 318 million followers.



Figure 11: Cristiano Ronaldo's Instagram profile



Retrieved 2021 from <https://www.instagram.com/cristiano/?hl=es-la> Screenshot by author.

According to the social media analytics company Hopper,

Cristiano Ronaldo can earn more than anyone else on the planet through sponsored Instagram posts. Per post, the cost for advertisers to get their product seen by Ronaldo's millions of followers is \$1.6 million (this is \$80,000 more than the second placed celebrity, Dwayne 'The Rock' Johnson). (Copper, 2021, para. 1)



For brands interested in becoming associated with football without a proper sponsorship, they now can count on athletes with sizable following bases for both content and distributing the messages.

3.2. Content Creators - Spencer Owen:

Similar to the rise of athletes as influencers, we have experienced over the last decade an explosion of the number of creators of all sorts. Using their knowledge, charisma and some basic tools, they mastered the social media platforms attracting the attention of fans and brands.

They are in all areas of life, but very few fields have offered as much as a fertile ground for creators than football. Gone are the days when the press coverage of the sport needed to be formal and boring with many pundits we can't relate to. Now, we have a different set of voices that are more relatable and fun to follow.

In this group, few are as entertaining and authentic than Spencer Owen, the creator of Hashtag United, among others.

Figure 12: Spencer Owen's Twitter profile

← **Spencer** ✓
34.1K Tweets

Spencer ✓
@SpencerOwen Follows you

Founder & CEO of [@HashtagUtd](#) - [@hashtagutdwomen](#) - [@htuesports](#).
Football & Esports Presenter.
✉ seb@hashtagunited.co.uk

📍 London 🌐 youtube.com/spencerfc 📅 Joined March 2009

2,685 Following **656.9K** Followers

Following



Retrieved 2021 from <https://twitter.com/spencerowen> Screenshot by author.

In addition to his multiple channels of communication, Spencer and his team have also created a real football team (same name) that is now playing in the 8th league in the UK.

He has also done successful projects for global brands, like Coca-Cola at the 2018 FIFA World Cup in Russia and Unilever's Lynx, just to name a few.

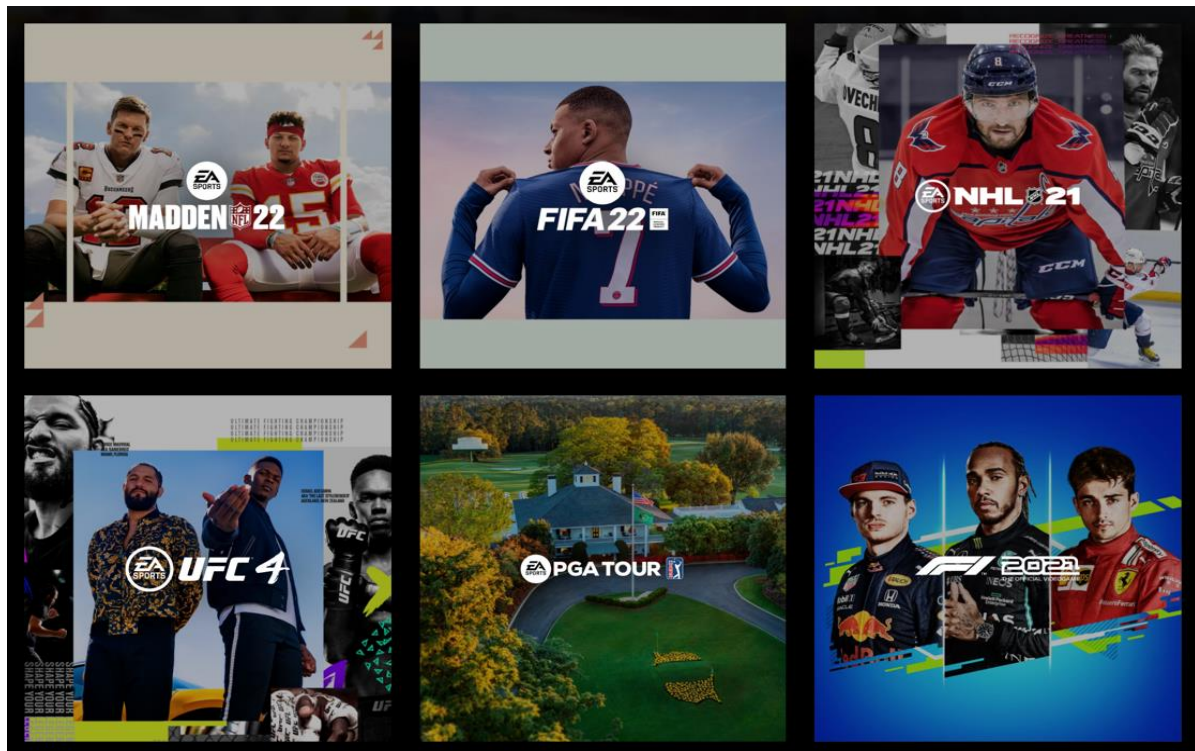
Media Companies & Gaming Publishers:

4.1 EA Sports

EA Sports is the publisher behind many of the world's best gaming titles. They are also the producers of content that fuel the campaigns of many brands interested in strengthening their association with sports.

Brands love to work with EA for many reasons: sometimes, for their animation capabilities (which are far better than some of the best production houses in the world); other times, for their superior storytelling. Brands even partner with them when they need to tell a story of a player of the past (that might no longer be fit to play or even alive) or simply to work around the availability of players (it's easy to produce a film with Lionel Messi if you don't actually need him on set!).

Figure 13: EA Sports Home page



Retrieved 2021 from <https://www.ea.com/sports> Screenshot by author.



With the technology development, processing capabilities and expansion of bandwidth, the watching experience of the game today is as real as the reality can offer us.

Figure 14: FIFA 22 new releases



Retrieved 2021 from <https://www.givemesport.com/1719904-fifa-22-reveal-trailer-unveils-new-ingame-features> Screenshot by author.

4.2 Netflix, Amazon & ESPN:

Netflix, Amazon and ESPN are among the best content producers in the world today. Despite the significant differences in their business models (the first two are ad-free, subscription-based, and mostly video-on-demand while the last one is focused on live sports and has advertising as a big part of their revenues), they have something in common: content production is at the core of their businesses.

Netflix alone, in their latest quarterly earnings call (in July 2021), said that in the first half of this year, they spent US\$8 billion in cash on content and expects content amortization to be around US\$12 billion for the full year (Bursztynsky, 2021).

In 2020, “Amazon spent \$11 billion on content for its streaming video and music services (...) the latest sign of the company’s willingness to invest heavily in entertaining Prime members”, as reported by Annie Palmer through CNBC (2021, para. 1).

These investments are growing fast to keep the companies competitive in the global battle for subscribers. In the case of Amazon, “the \$11 billion in content spend in 2020 is a sharp uptick from a year earlier, when Amazon spent \$7.8 billion, according to the report” (Palmer, 2021, para. 2).



Figure 15: Amazon sports series



Screenshot by author.

With or without traditional advertising opportunities, it is possible for brands to (directly or indirectly) tap into their content production capabilities in specific projects.

As a sponsor of Manchester City, for example, the Amazon Original “All or Nothing” provides great visibility and integration in the club’s storytelling. That is additional value to City’s partners making them a more appealing target for brands. The same happens with the commercial partners of all the other clubs, franchises and national teams featured in the series.

Figure 16: Netflix sports series



Screenshot by author.

How are the brands using content?



Established brands, interested in becoming more relevant to their consumers keeping them engaged for longer in conversations and consumption, are constantly looking for sports and entertainment content.

Sometimes, they try to create content themselves (for example, developing owned marketing assets), but this takes too much time and requires too much investment. The fastest, cheapest and safest approach to content creation is really “buying the content” from one of the sources described in the paragraphs above.

This is how a company would manage this process (not a real example):

A fashion brand interested in selling more of its products to a young audience, let’s say 12 to 19-year-old boys and girls in Western Europe, evaluates the market and identifies a few passion points in sports and entertainment. They finally shortlist their options for football and music. They know teens are heavy consumers of everything related to these passions.

After some research, looking at the social media engagement levels that footballers, clubs, leagues, artists, bands and events, they decide to explore the opportunities in football.

Figure 17: DJ playing techno music, representing youth interests vs. a football player with the ball, representing “only football”



Adapted from *DJ at Work*, by M. Laskoski, 2016. Unsplash. <https://unsplash.com/photos/YrtFlrLo2DQ> and *Athletics*, by M. Madhi, 2020. Unsplash. <https://unsplash.com/photos/lQpFRPrepQ8>

Because they are well-known, they are not looking at simply showcasing their brand, stamping their logo in some big and popular football club. They need more than that. They



need to be integrated in the youth culture in a natural and authentic way, so that when teens think about their passions, they also think about the brand.

In order to reach teens interested in football, the sponsorship team partnered with EA sport to integrate their brand in the FIFA 21 game. As part of the Career Mode of the game, the players can choose to sign a sponsorship deal (inside the game) with their brand, becoming a virtual brand ambassador. In the game, you even have the player filming a commercial in which he is wearing the brand's logo and designs. EA is providing them the content they need to promote the brand in their social media channels at the same time they offer the fashion brand exposure in the game.

Gamers playing FIFA 21 will organically come across the brand integration, something that happens all the time with real footballers in real life, explore the designs and be the stars of the advertising in the game.

Figure 18: FIFA 21 Career Mode official trailer



Retrieved 2021 from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JX30U5weSOQ> Screenshot by author.

Thanks to the interactivity offered by the game, the game players can also get discounts to order online the exact same designs their characters were wearing online. That will add more interest and make them post and comment and engage even more.

As part of the same campaign, the company also partners with Amazon Prime to develop a new series where they bring together the fashion of football.

It will be the equivalent of *Making the Cut* but focusing on the importance of design and fashion for football male and female players, from boots to game uniforms and, especially, casual clothing.

This is a brand-new show in which they will fund and co-author the content to be produced and distributed to Amazon Prime users where their products will be heavily displayed throughout the season.



Finally, they will work with some footballers, as influencers, asking them to wear and post their fashion tips in their social media channels. They will also be featured in the Amazon Prime show as well as in the EA game as their own avatars.

Figure 19: *Making the Cut* banner displayed in Amazon Prime



Retrieved 2021 from https://www.primevideo.com/detail/0KEP1P9UKB30N646ETOYB9ZJPW/ref=atv_dp_amz_det_c_UTPsmN_1_12?language=es_ES

Throughout this program, the brand has tapped into multiple sources of content in order to create, display and sell their products to this new audience. The benefit of this approach is the organic integration of all their advertising as interesting content. They didn't have to buy a single ad to be seen. Thanks to their approach, they were able to generate millions of views and comments: exactly the type of engagement they were looking for.

Let's take a look at real examples of partnership to create content for a brand.

1) Coca-Cola & Netflix's *Stranger Things* Season 3:

In this case, we will review the iconic case of Coca-Cola partnering with the Netflix show *Stranger Things*.

Coca-Cola is always working to keep teenagers engaged with their flagship brand. As part of this process, they identified an opportunity to partner with the producers of Netflix blockbuster TV show *Stranger Things*. The show is set in the 1980s, in the fictional town of Hawkins, Indiana. In total, there have been three seasons.

Season 3 was staged in 1985, the year The Coca-Cola Company launched the infamous "New Coke" (considered by some the greatest marketing failure in history and the greatest marketing success story by others).



“New Coke was always going to play a role this season,” the Duffer Brothers, the series’ creators, told The New York Times. “It was one of the first ideas in our Season three brainstorm. It was the summer of ’85, and when you talk about pop culture moments, New Coke was a really big deal. It would have been more bizarre to not include it. (Koblin, 2019, para. 7)

Coca-Cola and the producers work together to create content in and out of the show that would benefit both sides. On one hand, the company provided the show with all the original 1985 New Coke launch artifacts, signage and information, necessary to make the story visually appealing and accurate as possible.

Figure 20: Old Coke vending machine



From Why Coca-Cola chose to relive the New Coke disaster for Netflix’s “Stranger Things”, 2019. Fast Company. <https://www.fastcompany.com/90354710/why-coca-cola-chose-to-re-live-the-new-coke-disaster-for-netflix-stranger-things>

On the other side, they developed a plan that included the activation of many teen-relevant customer locations with “Stranger Things” and Coca-Cola signage, the production of a small batch of the New Coke formula on its original packaging sold exclusively online and other activities involving pop-culture influencers.



The result for season 3 of “Stranger Things” and for Coca-Cola came in the form of relevance, innovation and being part of an event that was incredibly relevant to Coke’s core audience.

Figure 21: “Stranger Things” scene



From *Why Coca-Cola chose to relive the New Coke disaster for Netflix’s “Stranger Things”, 2019*. Fast Company. <https://www.fastcompany.com/90354710/why-coca-cola-chose-to-re-live-the-new-coke-disaster-for-netflix-stranger-things>

2) IBM Watson and the 2021 Wimbledon:

Another interesting example is the work that IBM does at Wimbledon showcasing their Artificial Intelligence capabilities (by Watson). In this case, IBM is using the event (and Wimbledon is a rightsholder) to access the data they need to tell their technology stories. Differently from the previous example, here the content comes in the form of data through the “IBM Power Ranking”.

Figure 22: IBM work at Wimbledon 2021



Retrieved 2021 from <https://www.ibm.com/thought-leadership/wimbledon/uk-en/>
Screenshot by author.

This is how they describe the program:

IBM Power Rankings are an AI-powered analysis of player performance. The Tennis Tour ranking systems use 52-weeks of historical data to quantify player performance. To complement these, Power Rankings focus on a player's most recent history, combining advanced statistical analysis, the natural language processing of IBM Watson®, and the power of the IBM Cloud® to analyze daily performance data, mine media commentary, measure player momentum, and direct the attention of fans to the most compelling matchups. (IBM at Wimbledon 2021, 2021, para. 2)

The result is a compelling story that positions IBM Watson as the expert in Artificial Intelligence in a friendly and entertaining way.

3) Major League Soccer x Adidas x Inter Miami

Sustainability is also a powerful content for brands and leagues. One of the best recent examples is the MLS' (Major League Soccer) ocean conservation campaign in which every club will launch an Adidas jersey (the official supplier of the league) made with parley ocean plastic, called "Primeblue", ahead of World Oceans Day on the 8th of June.

In this particular case, Inter Miami took a different approach to remind everyone of just how clear the ocean can be if we all play our part. Partnering with a well-known freediving photographer and model, the club shot their jersey 100 feet under water in the crystal-clear oceans of the Cayman Islands.



Figure 23: Adidas Model wearing a new Inter Miami jersey under the ocean



Retrieved 2021 from <https://www.soccerbible.com/performance/football-apparel/2021/05/inter-miami-cf-unveil-primeblue-jersey-in-special-underwater-shoot/>
Screenshot by author.

Closing

We saw on the two initial modules of this course that brands have different needs. Some (new or with expansion ambitions) will spend their budgets buying visibility while others (more established and well known) will deposit all their chips in creating engagement with their consumers.

Aware of this need and pressured by the prospect and existing sponsors, rightsholders of all types had to invest to create this offer. They hired marketing and digital teams, created entire departments of production similar to what the most sophisticated advertising agencies have, changed the way they write their contracts with players to include the need of capturing content, learned how to deal with media companies, among other courses of action.

In a matter of a decade, they had to completely rewire their structures to remain competitive. What was a luxury 10 years ago has become a necessity to attract sponsors.

When brands go to market, they are looking for quality marketing rights. They still need the tickets, the hospitality, the meets and greets, the signage around the field and on uniforms. But, more than ever, they need film, photo and text they can use on their own social media platforms. This is the way they found to remain interesting to their own consumers.

If faced with two similar opportunities, one able to offer content and the other not so much, brands will always pick the former.

But for us, sponsorship marketers, it is important to remember that the rightsholders (clubs, leagues and players) are some of the sources of content in our work. Luckily, we have other resources, such as influencers, production and media companies, that can provide equally valuable material for our campaigns.

The great sponsorship marketers will tap into all the opportunities available for them. Like a hungry customer facing a lunch menu bar, they will mix and match all the alternatives available to make a great meal.

When it comes to creating a new marketing campaign using content from partners, there is no right answer. The talent of every manager is what will differentiate good from great. What really matters is to have the knowledge of all the possibilities so you know where to look for answers.

That was the purpose of this module.

In the third module of this course, we will discuss an even deeper level of engagement: how brands create love through purpose and social engagement. This happens when brands have established their identities and are highly engaged. Only then, can they afford to tackle bigger issues in society and create an unbreakable bond with their consumers.

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