

Breaking Ground: Understanding Motivations and Athlete Selection Criteria for Non-Involved Companies in NIL Sponsorship

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Abstract

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Introduction & Background

Due to legal changes in 2021, student-athletes competing at the intercollegiate level are now able to use and capitalize on their name, image, and likeness (NIL). Since these changes occurred, more and more student-athletes have taken advantage of this opportunity and collaborated with corporate sponsors to represent these brands. This study will take a slightly different approach and focus on the sponsorship perspective. In this context, the main aim is to understand corporation's motivations for getting involved in NIL sponsorships and what student-athlete characteristics they seek. The sample group will therefore focus on corporations that are currently not involved in NIL deals but may be interested in the future engaging in NIL sponsorships.

Review of Literature

In general, one definition of corporate sponsors is: "a cash and/or in-kind fee paid to a property (typically sports, entertainment, non-profit event or organization) in return for access to the exploitable commercial potential associated with that property" (IEG, 2003, p.5). NIL is fairly unique based on this definition as the property is in this case intercollegiate student-athletes. Foundational literature on sponsorship suggests individual and group-level factors, market factors, management factors all influence the way a consumer processes a sponsorship and the resulting outcomes stemming from that sponsorship (Cornwell, 2005; Cornwell & Maignan, 1998). However, less is understood about this process in the NIL context, especially from the management perspective of companies looking to form NIL partnerships with collegiate athletes.

Methods

This in-progress study will focus on a survey-based research methodology. The primary sample group (N=10-20) are corporations in a southeastern metropolitan area in the United States that have a general interest in getting involved in NIL sponsorships but are currently not involved in any NIL deals. The aim would be that a marketing manager or a high-level executive of the corporation, who would be involved in the potential negotiation process of an NIL deal, would participate in the survey. The survey tool will focus on two main topics, sponsorship motivations and student-athletes characteristics/demographics. The objectives are to examine what the primary motives would be to get involved in NIL sponsorships and what student-athlete characteristics are important for corporations when they make decisions regarding NIL

sponsorships.

Findings

These findings will be important to get an understanding of the corporation's perspective on NIL sponsorships. This will help to recognize motives and also barriers to do NIL sponsorships. In addition, the study will examine if certain student-athlete characteristics like sport, gender, and level of competition might be important to consider for corporations and what characteristics they would prefer. Lastly, the study is broad, which has the major advantage that the findings should offer content and discussion questions for future research studies in this particular research field.

References:

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