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An Examination of the Marketing of a Floundering Sport: The Case of Powerboat Racing

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ABSTRACT

A sample of 308 attendees at an APBA sanctioned powerboat race in July of 2015 provided insight regarding a number of key considerations germane to the decision to attend the race. Race organizers were seeking ways to reinvigorate interest in what they see as a floundering – if not sinking – sport. A self-administered survey was distributed at the race with those completing it having a chance to win a souvenir shirt from the races. The results indicate that better marketing is needed. WOM represented the most common means by which attendees learned about the event; much of this was from family members. While the race was important to the fans, they clearly had greater expectations regarding the peripheral product and the associated merchandising. Yet the vast majority of those attending indicated that they had either a good, a very good, or a fantastic time. Race organizers will use this information to attempt to bring in more fans to future races. They also plan on engaging in a follow-up study to see what they have learned.

INTRODUCTION

Sports marketing comprises many tasks. But the one that most readily comes to the layman's mind is the task of selling tickets to spectator sports events. As the sports marketing practitioners say it: putting butts in the seats. Spectator sports come at many levels, from free recreational events for which no admission fee is charged to high level professional events such as the World Cup (of Soccer) and the Super Bowl where the face value of the most expensive tickets often crosses the \$1,000 threshold, and prices can greatly exceed that on the secondary ticket market. As is true for most industries, in spectator sports some products are flourishing while others are floundering. While the NFL is flourishing, powerboat racing is perceived by many to be one of those floundering sports.

Organizers associated with the event that was sanctioned by American Power Boat Association (APBA) were perplexed. Their fan base is seen as aging, and efforts to attract a younger fan base have been both infrequent and characterized by APBA personnel as ineffective. The decision was made to engage in a study of attendees at a recent race in order to assess the profile of the fan base and to determine the motivating factors which led to their decision to attend an APBA sanctioned event. The event under scrutiny is the *Quake on the Lake*, a series of races that was staged in July of 2015.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature on spectator sports marketing is vast; however, the literature on powerboat racing is sparse. This review will address both of these domains as they relate to the project at hand.

A spectator sports product comprises two primary components. The *core product* is essentially the way the competition is conducted and officiated. For powerboat racing, the core product concerns the races on the lake. The *peripheral product* concerns those factors that surround the event over which the organizers have some reasonable control. Again, for powerboat racing this involves the ancillary activities such as a classic car show, beach activities, concerts, craft shows, and other attractions that take place during the course of the primary event. For marketers of spectator sports, both the core product and the peripheral product are important to the success of any event. (Sutton and Parrett, 1992). Like virtually every other product on the broad marketing landscape, marketers of spectator sports understand that their market is not one homogeneous set of consumers. There are identifiable market segments. The members of these segments have different motives for attending. One important study of the segments in the aggregate spectator sports market was completed by Watson and Rich (2000). They identified six segments: players, patriots, appreciators, socialites, friends, and voyeurs. That study was updated, and a total of nine segments were identified. The subsequent study also focused on motives; while it deleted the voyeur segment from the Watson and Rich study, it added four new segments. These new segments were the avid fan, the novelty fan, the situational fan, and the reluctant spectator (Author, 2013). Most spectator sports likely have fans from all nine segments of this revised typology, so it is incumbent upon event organizers to determine which segments are most important to their sport. Fans of beach volleyball tend to watch for reasons far different than those fans of powerboat racing. Aiken and Sukhdial (2004) addressed the old school versus new school dichotomy. One would speculate that fans of powerboat racing are more likely to fall within the realm of old-school fans. Meanwhile, Milne, Sutton, and McDonald (1996) proposed that smaller segments, or niches, may be relevant to some marketers of spectator sports. The rationale used for the earlier decision by Author (2013) to delete the voyeur segment was predicated upon the fact that it comprised less than one percent of the aggregate spectator sports market, thus it was relegated to the category of a niche. It should be noted that the two studies by Watson and Rich (2000) and Author (2013) both delineated a typology were for the aggregate market, not a particular sport. Author noted that voyeurs could still rise beyond the niche level and be an important segment for certain sports such as beach volleyball. Another study of the spectator sports market also looked at motives for attending sports events. It focused on SPEED; that is to say the motives of socialization, performance, excitement, esteem, and diversion (Funk, Filo, Beaton, and Pritchard, 2009). However, that study focused on various forms of football germane to the Australian market while drawing inferences to denote its relevance to other sports.

While much of the focus in the previous paragraph was on the aggregate fan market, there have been numerous efforts to segment the market for a specific sport. For example, one noteworthy effort was the study that used geo-demographic and psychographic criteria to segment the soccer (football) market. Among the segments identified were those labeled as *professional wanderers*,

carefree casuals, and *repertoire fans* (Tapp and Clowes, 2002). Mullin, Hardy, and Sutton (2000) asserted that segmentation for a football team is best accomplished on the basis of loyalty – that is to say the number of games that they attended during the course of a season. By identifying segments which were classified as *casual*, *regular*, and *fanatics*, the authors were able to identify differences on the bases of select psychographic and behavioral variables other than attendance. One result of that study was the determination that the casual segment needed to be further divided so as to draw the distinction between *carefree casuals* and *committed casuals* while further delineating a segment that was labeled as *repertoire fans*. In yet another effort to segment fans of a particular sport, Stewart and Smith (1997) developed a typology for supporters of Australian Rules Football. The five segments identified were the *aficionado*, *theatre goer*, *passionate partisan*, *champ follower*, and *reclusive partisan*.

Continuing with the theme of team-based or sport-based segmentation, Kennett, Sneath, and Henson (2001) segmented the fan base of a minor league (ice) hockey team with satisfaction being the primary criterion used to subdivide the market. The authors factor analyzed 29 items that were deemed to influence satisfaction, but those constructs were used to evaluate segments defined on the bases of conventional criteria including level of attendance, type of ticket purchased, and the likelihood of attending future games. Similarly, Garland, McPherson, and Haughey (2004) identified three segments of rugby fans in New Zealand. By measuring the fans' levels of attendance and involvement, three segments were documented. That research was an application of Quick's typology that first identified these three segments of spectator sports fans. Using the fans' level of involvement, the three segments that were delineated were the *aficionados (hard-core)*, *fair-weather fans*, and the *theatre-goers* (Quick, 2000). Koo and Hardin (2008) applied the concept of fan attachment to identify the various segments germane to women's college basketball. One interesting point of demarcation that was drawn in that study is the distinction between the fan segment and the spectator segment, the implication being that not everyone in attendance should be characterized as a fan. In yet another more narrowly defined study, Ross (2007) surveyed season ticket holders of an NBA team. His analysis identified two distinct clusters for which significant differences based on demographic makeup and on their perceptions of the "sports brand" were documented.

Besides research on the product and the target markets, there is other research that looks at spectator sports. Concern is typically directed towards the question of what attracts fans to the venue. Bae (2004) examined an array of variables that purportedly influence the decision to attend an NHL game. Another study of this ilk was one which indicated, according to NBA fans, that the tool that NBA teams could use to get them to attend more games was that of promotional premiums and giveaways (Dick and Turner, 2007). One study reported on a phenomenon that has become much more commonplace in the marketing of intercollegiate sports, especially when those institutions experience problems attracting their students to competitions. The University of Nevada Las Vegas reported that a student rewards programs was effective in its quest to increase student attendance for games against lesser quality opponents, even though the tickets were free to the students (Petz, 2011). Such a strategy is common in customer relationship management programs across a varied array of industries. A broader study looked at fan motivations regarding their decision to attend a college football game (Kahle, Kambara, and Rose, 1996). An even broader study examined fan motives for attending different sports (Wann, Grieve, Zapalac, and Pease, 2008). Pease and Zhang (2001) examined the motivational factors

specific to attending a professional basketball game. Clearly, sports marketers see a need to better understand the motives for attending sports events in general as well as each individual sport. Presumably, this would include powerboat racing. This presumption segues to the next component of this literature review.

The second component of this literature review will address research and commentary specific to the boat racing industry. As noted earlier, empirical research on this aspect of the spectator sports industry is comparatively sparse. In fact, the literature on powerboat racing involving an empirical basis is virtually nonexistent. The preponderance of the modest amount of literature available addresses the large-scale sailboat races rather than the powerboats. A few articles address the Volvo Ocean Race and the America's Cup Regatta. Yet races of this ilk are far different phenomena in comparison to powerboat racing. The core products are vastly different as are their primary target markets. Having said that, there is still a need to examine whatever literature might provide a clue into the issues germane to the broader category of boat racing along with any pertinent information regarding powerboat racing.

For the sailing genre of boat racing, a limited amount of literature is available. Furthermore, much of it is fundamental information disseminated in the popular press. There is little in the way of empirical research that addresses key marketing constructs such as the target market, the product, and the other three variables of the traditional marketing mix. One article from the *Financial Times* referred to superyacht racing as a young sport and further characterized it as growing fast (Holtom, 2012). Assertions of this ilk would place this genre of racing in the growth stage of the product life cycle. What might qualify this as a growth product is the reality that this article focuses more on superyacht racing as a participation sport rather than a spectator sport. Yet we know that people who participate in a sport are more likely to be a fan of that sport. Earlier, there was an acknowledgement of the players segment as identified by Watson and Rich (2000). Another article from ten years ago highlighted the Volvo Ocean Race; however, it simply delineated information regarding the sport and the event. Thus, it really did not address any issues germane to the tasks associated with the marketing of the event as a spectator sport (Anonymous, 2005).

Much of the literature on America's Cup is directed towards sponsorship issues – new sponsors (like Emirates Airlines) signing on and old sponsors (like BMW) terminating their relationship with the event. For example, it was announced that the Oracle team had entered into an agreement with Airbus Industries. By signing up the French aircraft manufacturer, it is believed that one result will be enhancements in aerodynamics, instrumentation, simulation, composites, hydraulics, and data analysis that will aid in the Oracle team's defense of its title in 2017 (Anonymous 2014a).

Obviously, it is difficult to consider the superyacht races to be spectator sports, especially when considering the live audience. How do we get a live audience for an around-the-world yacht race? Perhaps the emphasis should be on the media-based audience. New technology allows audio and video to be transmitted and disseminated to a variety of media such as TV and the Internet. In this regard, America's Cup has implemented new technology using the Livestream portal so as to create a better way to reach the media-based audience (Anonymous, 2015b). Even

for powerboat racing, a significant focus has been directed towards the media-based audience. In this regard, it was reported That Fox Sports has teamed up with Powerboat P1 in a broadcast deal that will televise the races to more than 100 countries. While increasing exposure of the races and the sponsors, it was concluded that “the value of powerboat racing is increasing significantly” (Anonymous 2014b). This recent statement hardly sounds like a description of a floundering sport that is in the latter stages of its product life cycle.

When the focus shifts to powerboat racing, much of the literature addresses new competitions while little examines other marketing initiatives. And like the superyacht racing, much of the literature addresses sponsorship issues. For example, Detroit’s Gold Cup races were in jeopardy of being abandoned some 15 years ago when Jeep came on board as a title sponsor. According to Chrysler spokesperson, Mark Snethkamp, Jeep was “determined to keep this great racing tradition alive for all people who are thrilled and entertained by this uniquely American sport” (Anonymous, 2002). Interestingly, around that same time, General Motors signed a sponsorship deal with APBA that included a title sponsorship for the GMC Pro Grade APBA Offshore Series. But the company’s primary goal was to capitalize on the strategic linkage that would allow them to inform consumers that more than 99% of the engines found in the race boats were nearly identical to the GM Vortec engine (Greenberg, 2003). So as with many sports, one of the key considerations is how marketers of nonsports products can use a sports platform – such as one achieved via the sponsorship of a sports property – to sell its own nonsports products.

One intriguing article examined what was perceived to be a shifting paradigm for unlimited hydroplane racing. The article posited that these fastest boats on the water had witnessed an evolution from sport to business from 1946 to 1960 (Honhart, 2010). More recently, it was announced that London-based Powerboat P1 has set up an American subsidiary with the intention of establishing a new series of race events in North America in association with the APBA. Prior to announcing its plans, Powerboat P1 indicated that it had spent two full years marketing itself and creating awareness in the US market (Anonymous 2010a). Powerboat racing, in particular drag racing, has even witnessed the construction of a dedicated facility with Lucas Lake in Springfield, Missouri, built to host this type of powerboat race (Anonymous, 2010b). From a somewhat different perspective, the Qatar Marine Sports Federation recently announced its decision to develop new technology designed to make the unlimited class of boats move even faster with the intent of entering a boat in the Extreme/Turbine class effective 2013 (Sambidge, 2012). The role of the peripheral product is also highlighted in some stories in the popular press. For example, one race was completely dedicated to a charity festival with the idea that the linkage to the cause would bring spectators to the venue (Anonymous, 2010c). The role of the peripheral product was also delineated for an event staged in Memphis, Tennessee. The Memphis races featured live music, southern food, a kiddie park, kayak races, and jet-ski acrobatics. It also highlighted the potential problem associated with downtime as the races were on the Mississippi River where tugboats and barges need to pass on the important waterway (Sayle, 2009). Another race used free admission to attract spectators. However, as part of the peripheral product, admission to the pit and the ability to see the boats up-close and personal involved a fee (Gilfillian, 2011). That article further went on to state that powerboat races involve two primary motivations: family and fun. The fun is perceived to be a function of power and speed, thus the core product is a primary reason as to why the fans choose to attend

powerboat races. Fun is highlighted by an event in Pittsburgh that featured fireworks displays after two days of events (Gormly. 2013). But it also focused on peripheral products with a participation race for “Anything that Floats,” sand sculptures, free concerts, and a skydiving exhibition.

It is apparent that much of the literature regarding boat races focuses on events, boat technology, the peripheral product, and sponsors. Little energy has been directed towards the determination of key marketing considerations. In this regard, empirical studies that seek to better understand the marketing-related considerations inherent to boat racing are essentially nonexistent. This deficiency needs to be addressed if boat racing, especially powerboat racing, is to survive. This research represents one foray into the effort to address this deficiency.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

There were several objectives germane to this research project. Foremost was the determination of the primary motive that influenced the decision to attend the event. Second was to gain an understanding of other factors that influenced that decision. Next was the issue of how the attendee became aware of the event in the first place. Then there was a need to know how much the fans knew about the event’s connection with a charity, namely the Rainbow Connection. And as with any sports event that has a cause-related marketing overlay, there was a desire to know if the connection with the charity influenced the fans’ decision to attend the event. Attendees provided insight into how the event could be improved. Then their level of enjoyment was assessed. Determining of attending group’s size represented the eighth objective. The final two objectives addressed common demographics. What was the gender breakdown of the spectators, and what was the age distribution of those in attendance. And more importantly, were the two primary demographics related to any of the issues examined in the study? As such, there were ten research objectives germane to this research. By addressing these ten objectives, organizers should be able to answer one key question. Is powerboat racing flourishing, floating, or floundering?

METHODOLOGY

Insight regarding the data collection instrument was provided by administrators of the American Power Boat Association. That information was used to develop a preliminary survey. Additional questions were added by the researcher. Upon completion, the survey was sent to the APBA administrators for their input. One minor addition was incorporated, and the questionnaire was approved for dissemination. It comprised nine questions regarding the event and three demographic questions. Two of the 12 questions were open ended thereby requiring some additional coding considerations. The survey was two pages printed back-to-back on blue paper.

Since the target population was those in attendance at the event, the decision was made to collect data at the lake where the races were taking place. Five students who recently completed a Sports Marketing class were recruited to collect the data. These five students took part in an informational session where one of the race directors and their professor were able to essentially

train them in the data collection process. They were told to make every effort to make the sample representative of the population on the basis of age and gender; that is to say, don't select potential respondents because their demographic profile is similar to their own thus increasing the likelihood that they would respond. The data collectors were also told to not distribute the surveys to entire groups of attendees, rather they should ask which individual in the group wanted to respond. Finally, they were told to anticipate some refusals and not to look at that as failure. Simply thank those who refused, and tell them to enjoy their day at the races. The survey was self-administered. Respondents were given the survey, a clipboard, and a pen. It took about three minutes to complete. The result was 308 surveys with only four where the respondent failed to complete both pages of the survey.

Data analysis was simple. Frequency distributions were used for nominally-scaled data. For the one intervally-scaled question, a frequency distribution and an item mean were used. To assess differences across the demographic groups, cross tabs and the corresponding chi-squared test of independence were used. An alpha of .05 was used as the benchmark for rejecting the null hypothesis of statistical independence.

RESULTS

The sample of 308 attendees was a reasonable representation of the target population, that is to say those adults in attendance at the Quake on the Lake races. Fully 40.5 percent of those responding were female. Race organizers felt this was a reasonable snapshot of the attendees. When looking at age, 19.1 percent of the respondents were under 25; 20.4 percent were 25-35; 18.8 percent were 36-45; 23.7 percent were 46-55; and 19.1 percent were over the age of 55. Thus, the breakdown reflects a relatively uniform distribution across the five age groups. It should be noted that the "56-65" and "over 65" age groups were combined to form a single "over 55" category.

Table 1
Single Most Important Reason for Attending Today's Races

Reason	Frequency	Percentage
Race Itself	113	36.7
Socialize w/ Friends & Family	98	31.8
Inexpensive Entertainment	47	15.3
Somebody Else Made the Decision	16	5.2
Other	34	11.0

The first objective was to determine the primary motive that influenced the individual's decision to attend the races. Several potential reasons were delineated in a multiple choice format, but the respondents were given a chance to add their own reason with an "Other" category. The two most important reasons for attending were "the Race Itself" and the opportunity to "Socialize with Friends and Family." These two categories represented 68.5 of the responses. Third was the perception that the race represented an "Inexpensive Entertainment alternative. Fourth was the fact that the decision to attend was "Made by Somebody Else." The remaining attendees

selected one of the remaining categories or indicated “Other” and provided their own reason. This group comprised 11 percent of the sample. The reasons given included (in descending order) for the music, for beach activities, for the car show, for the craft show, and because it is a ritual to attend. Table 1 provides an overview of these results.

The respondents were given an opportunity to state another reason for attending. Some of these responses included those from Table 1. In other words, socializing might have been the most important reason to attend, but the fact that it was an inexpensive entertainment alternative also influenced the decision. Since this was an optional and open-ended question, not all respondents gave an answer to this question. Therefore, there were 199 valid responses recorded. Table 2 provides an overview of the most frequently stated secondary, but important, reasons for attending.

Table 2
Secondary but Important Reason for Attending Today’s Races

Reason	Frequency	Percentage
Socialize w/ Friends & Family	32	16.1
Beach Activities	27	13.6
Weather	22	11.1
Fun	18	9.0
Nothing Else to Do	12	6.0
Outdoors	10	5.0
Other	78	39.2

Socialization with one’s friends and family topped the list of secondary reasons. Next was the idea that those in attendance would be able to engage in a variety of beach activities. Great weather induced some to seek an outdoor leisure activity, especially those who indicated that there was nothing else for them to do on race day. Numerous other reasons appeared in small numbers. Among the other reasons for attending were the car show, it was something new to experience, it was a ritual, there was music, and it offered an opportunity to relax.

The third objective was to determine how the spectators first learned about the event. This issue was deemed to be important as it would provide some insight into how effective the organization’s marketing had been in the task of creating awareness of the event. Again, the respondents were given several choices, but could also indicate any other source that was not on the survey. A total of 10 sources were noted. The most mentioned source was friends or co-workers with almost half of the respondents identifying them as their initial source. Next on the list was family followed by the Internet. Next was a tie between signage and general word-of-mouth (WOM) communications. It is apparent that interpersonal communication between the attendee and one in his or her members within the various circles of friends and acquaintances drove the attendance. In other words, WOM drives attendance at this event. Table 3 summarizes the results germane to this objective.

Table 3
How Did You First Hear About Quake on the Lake?

Source	Frequency	Percentage
Friend or Co-worker	143	46.7
Family	31	10.1
WWW	25	8.2
Signage	22	7.2
Word-of-Mouth	22	7.2
TV	15	4.9
Newspaper	14	4.6
I'm a Regular Attendee	14	4.6
Facebook	12	3.9
Work or school	8	2.6

The fourth and fifth objectives concerned the event's relationship with the Rainbow Connection. This charity is similar to Make-a-Wish in that it raises funds to help families with critically ill children or children with a short life expectancy. Regarding those who were previously aware of the relationship, the numbers were somewhat disappointing. Just over a third of the respondents (34.3%) were aware of the relationship. Objective five produced somewhat more reassuring results as over 40 percent (41.8%) of the respondents indicated that their awareness of the relationship with the Rainbow Connection would influence their decision to attend in future races. Yet this result is somewhat paradoxical as it conflicts with the reality that only two respondents indicated that an important reason leading to their decision to attend was to provide support to the Rainbow Connection.

As future events are considered, the APBA needs to know what they can do to improve the fans' experience at the races. A better understanding of these issues represents objective number six. To achieve this objective, a completely open-ended question was used. There were a total of 164 responses to this question. These 164 responses delineated 22 different actions. While there isn't much the organization can do to offer better weather, more shaded areas, and sidewalks without goose poop, there are some viable options for the event organizers to consider for 2016. And they essentially all relate to the peripheral product, the core product, and issues surrounding the sale of food and beverages at the venue. Table 4 provides an overview of these results which address objective six. But it only documents actions that the event organizers have reasonable control; in other words issues such as better weather are excluded. Elimination of non-controllable actions reduces the list of pertinent responses to 142.

Table 4
What Can Be Done to Make Your Visit More Enjoyable?

Action	Frequency	Percentage
Beach & Swimming Activities	33	23.2
More Food & Beverage Options	12	8.5
More Racing & Boats/Less Down Time	12	8.5
More Things for Kids	9	6.3
More Info on PA (also louder)	9	6.3
Pits – Free Access/Better Sight Lines	8	5.6
Less Expensive Food & Beverages	8	5.6
More Ancillary Activities beyond Race	7	4.9
More Concerts / Diversify Music	6	4.2
More Family Activities	5	3.5
Participate; Boat Rides	5	3.5
More Craft Shopping	5	3.5
Bleacher Seating	4	2.8
Parking Shuttle	4	2.8
Signage to Help Find Event	4	2.8
More Info on Schedule & Events	4	2.8
More info at venue	4	2.8
Other	3	2.1

Research objective seven addressed the fan’s level of enjoyment. Respondents indicated their personal level of enjoyment by answering an unbalanced, forced, itemized rating scale where each of the six points had a verbal description. Over 90 percent of those responding indicated that they had a good time or better (very good or fantastic). So only 9.6 percent indicated that they had a fair time or worse. And it should be noted that no respondents rated their level of enjoyment at the worst end of the rating scale. The results emanating from this question are summarized in Table 5.

Table 5
How Would You Rate Your Level of Enjoyment?

Response	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Fantastic (1)	72	23.8	23.8
Very Good (2)	107	35.4	59.3
Good (3)	94	31.1	90.4
Fair (4)	24	7.9	98.3
Pretty Low (5)	5	1.7	100.0
Didn’t enjoy it at all (6) 0	0	0.0	100.0

The mean was calculated for the distribution reflecting the fans’ level of enjoyment. However, it is recognized that the characteristics of the scale likely lead many observers to classify it as an

ordinal scale rather than an interval scale. For those taking the ordinal scale perspective, the median and mode of 2.0 documents the fact that the vast majority of the fans in attendance experienced a high level of enjoyment. Those accepting the premise that the scale is interval in nature will view the mean of 2.28 to be additional evidence attesting to the spectators' high level of enjoyment.

Objective eight concerned the desire to learn more about the composition of the fans' party. In other words, how many people comprised the group that accompanied the respondent? Of particular interest is the fact that 47.4 percent of the respondents attended as part of a group of four or more. If you extrapolate this finding, it means that more than 60 percent of those who attended were part of a comparatively large group. Only two percent came alone. Table 6 summarizes these results.

Table 6
How Many Were in Your Party Today?

Number	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
1	6	2.0	2.0
2	84	27.6	29.6
3	70	23.0	52.6
4	62	20.4	73.0
5 or more	82	27.0	100.0
No Reply	4	x	x

Objectives nine and ten address demographic issues pertinent to the study. As noted earlier in this Results section, the age and gender metrics were deemed to be a reasonable representation of the fans in attendance. But the real point of concern involved the question of whether either demographic variable was deemed to be related to any of the issues under scrutiny. The examination will begin with scrutiny of gender. Was one sex more prone to respond in a particular way regarding how they heard about the race, the reasons for attending, knowledge of race's relationship with the charity, whether they were even previously aware of the Rainbow Connection, whether it would influence their decision to attend, their level of enjoyment, what would make it a more enjoyable event, and the size of their party.

This assessment will begin by looking at the variables that were found to exhibit a statistically significant relationship with the sex of the respondent. Only three assessments produced a level of significance below the .05 threshold for rejection of the hypothesis of statistical independence. First was where the respondent initially heard about the event. Men were more likely to indicate a family source whereas women were more likely to say that they are a regular attendee. The second issue that was found to be associated with gender is the most important reason for attending. Men were more likely to cite the race itself while also pointing towards the race as inexpensive entertainment. Women were far more likely to point to the opportunity to socialize with friends and family. Next, for the issue of what would make your visit more enjoyable, gender was found to be significantly related to two suggestions. Women wanted more beach activities whereas men wanted more boats with more racing.

When the focus shifted to the age of the respondent, more relationships were identified. When age was the independent variable, the null hypothesis of statistical independence was rejected for five of the issues under scrutiny. As was the case with gender, age was found to be associated with the source whereby the respondent first learned about the race. The younger fans were more likely to hear about it from a family member, a friend, or a co-worker. Regarding the most important factor leading to the decision to attend, middle-aged spectators were most likely to point to the race itself; the group aged 45 and younger pointed to beach activities, and those under the age of 25 indicated their assessment that it was an inexpensive entertainment option. The issue of making the race more enjoyable was found to be related to age as well. More specifically, younger attendees wanted more opportunities to partake in beach activities whereas the older segments were more inclined to stress that they would like to see more activities for kids. It should be noted that on the qualitative responses on the survey, some respondents referred to outings with their grandchildren. Note that to this point in the discussion, the three issues related to age were the same three that were related to gender. However, age was found to be related to two additional issues that were not concurrently related to gender. The fourth statistically significant relationship with age involved the level of enjoyment at the races. In this case, older fans were slightly more prone to rate their level of enjoyment higher. The final variable that exhibited a relationship with age was the size of the attending party. Fans in the 55-65 year-old age group were far more likely to report that they attended alone. Conversely, it was members of the youngest group (aged under 25) that were most likely to be attending with just one other person. Finally, it was those in the 35 and younger segment that were most likely to indicate that the size of their party was four or more.

In summary, eight relationships were documented for the two demographic variables used in this study. Five issues were found to be related to age while three relationships were documented when the focus shifted to gender. These results are summarized in Table 7.

Table 7
Documented Relationships with Age and/or Gender

Issue	Demographic	Significance	Tendency
First hear about	Sex	.022	men (family); women (regular)
First hear about	Age	.000	younger (<36) (family, friend, work)
Most important	Sex	.036	men (race itself; cheap); women (social)
Most important	Age	.000	young (\$); mid (race); younger (beach)
Make it better	Sex	.001	women (beach); men (more boats/races)
Make it better	Age	.000	young (beach); older (stuff for kids)
Level of enjoyment	Age	.017	older (higher level of enjoyment)
Size of attending party	Age	.000	56-65 (alone); <25 (two); 5 (4 or more)

DISCUSSION

It is evident that the fans in attendance had high expectations for the race itself, thus it can be inferred that a meaningful portion of the crowd was focused on the core product. However, as

with most spectator sports products, the peripheral product has a meaningful impact on the reasons for attending, the level of satisfaction, and the likelihood of returning. This is a water-based competition with considerable down time. A meaningful number of fans were looking forward to beach activities. It is an issue that should be considered, and if it is integrated within the total product, it needs to be a focus of future promotions. Other peripheral products of note include more activities for kids, more family activities, better (and less expensive) food and beverage options, more races (even drag races), and more information being disseminated to the crowd via the public address announcer. Armed with new information, the organizers need to be more proactive and plan to communicate their message to the public.

Marketing needs to be either stepped up or made to be more effective – or both. The vast majority of those responding to the survey pointed to word-of-mouth as the way they first learned of the event. In other words, fans are not learning about the event from the organization's promotional efforts. The Internet should be exploited; whether it is the race Website, an APBA Website, or social media, it is evident that online communication is important, and it is not being sufficiently utilized. Public relations resulted in stories in local newspapers and local television, but these are not always reaching the event's target markets. Something as simple as traditional signage could bear positive results, especially if the signage is placed in the general area of the race venue. Therefore, it is incumbent upon the organization to give more thought to the development of a sound integrated marketing communications plan – one driven by realistic objectives that will reach out to its various target markets.

Charity affiliations have a dual purpose. Foremost is the effort to be a good corporate citizen. Donating resources to causes typically resonates with consumers. But these same consumers need to know about the relationship. Second, it is thought that an organization's relationship with a beloved cause will influence consumer behavior. In this case, it is hoped that the relationship with the Rainbow Connection will increase attendance. Approximately one-third of those in attendance reported an awareness that the relationship existed. And over 40 percent indicated that it would have a positive impact on their decision to attend. These results seem to transcend age and gender with no differences in awareness or opinions across all of the various demographic groups. Yet the results are somewhat paradoxical as only two attendees actually reported that an important reason for attending was to offer support for Rainbow Connection. So in spectator sports, two initiatives need to be taken in order to have a charitable connection pay off for the event. First and foremost, the public needs to know that the partnership with the cause exists. Second, those same members of the public need to have an understanding of who the charity is, what they stand for, and how their own attendance will benefit the charity. This is especially true for causes that do not possess a strong level of recognition among the prospective attendees.

A notable finding is the reality that many in attendance were part of a group of four or more patrons. This was especially true for the younger spectators. Group pricing could be a viable option; it might even induce a group of two or three to seek someone else to accompany them. Bundling could also be effective for groups; provide a number of tickets, programs, food and beverages for a discounted price. Bundling is a common practice in spectator sports today.

Marketers in every industry are faced with two broad objectives. First is that of acquiring new customers. Second is that of retaining existing customers. The paradigm has shifted more so from customer acquisition to customer retention. We now execute customer relationship management programs (CRM) in an effort to satisfy and retain our existing customer base. Marketers of spectator sports need to embrace this phenomenon. Clearly, as an event which is believed to be falling into disfavor, powerboat racing needs to reach out and add to its customer base. Young people who come in groups, fans who want it to be a family affair, and race aficionados represent three viable groups worth reaching out to. Yet there is evidence of a base of repeat patrons. They come every year; they deem it to be a ritual; they seek information about upcoming events. It would be wise, if not imperative, for event organizers to identify this segment of fans. Then it is important to communicate with them on a routine basis; make them feel like more than just another paying customer. By doing so, it will increase the likelihood that these fans will both attend and share word-of-mouth communication about upcoming events. These *avid fans* seek information; the organization should make that information readily accessible. In other words, for powerboat racing, both the acquisition of new fans and the retention of current fans represent important tasks for the organizers.

The organization has opportunities. It needs to capitalize on these opportunities by engaging consumers using effective relationship marketing initiatives. This does not mean spending \$6 million to advertise on the Super Bowl; rather it means using their resources wisely. By doing so, they can begin to benefit from the lifetime customer value of each fan.

CONCLUSIONS

Organizers for powerboat racing in the United States are concerned that their sport is floundering, that is to say late in its product life cycle. The results emanating from this study indicate that the situation might not be so dire. They have a broad base of fans when assessing the composition of the spectators on the bases of gender and age. Many are excited by the race and see the act of adding more races resulting in less down time to be a great way to improve the core product. But the peripheral product cannot, say again – cannot – be ignored. Ancillary components such as beach activities, better music, better food and beverage options, and the opportunity to participate in a boat ride all resonate with some members of the fan base. Furthermore, the organization needs to reassess its marketing efforts. The majority of those in attendance first learned of the race through word-of-mouth. However, a number of fans indicated that attending is a ritual. Thus, customer relationship management is essential. Learn who these regular fans are and communicate with them. Not only will they return, but they will spread the word and bring new fans with them. This will aid in the broad effort to attract new fans. New fans and existing fans are the two components where marketers of live spectator sports events focus.

So maybe powerboat racing is floating rather than floundering. It is conceivable that organizers in the United States can turn the course and re-establish it as a popular sport – if those in charge of staging these events can only recognize what the fan base wants and strive to deliver it. Such is the essence of sports marketing. So do not sound the death knell. Powerboat racing is still

afloat, and even secondary events such as powerboat racing have an opportunity to succeed in today's sports-crazy market.

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