



Covid-19: Role of Data Science in Sports

COVID-19 crisis has disrupted sports events worldwide since 1940. The 2020 Summer Olympics in Tokyo has been rescheduled to 2021. No game means no ticket sales and reduced media revenues. For the first time in nearly two decades, sports industry is facing a tough time.

Many questions are being raised about the current situation. How do you take care of fan's desires and interests? How do you plan for the future of events in short and long run? How to manage monetary risks? How to track real time business progress? How to ensure safety and security of fans?

"We've launched an NBA 2K competition [an esports form of the game] with players streaming from their homes. We have expedited production to bring forward the release of a Michael Jordan documentary. We're hosting live quarantine parties on social media with current and former players, and we're showing classic games every night – all things to continue to engage our fans during this time."
Mark Tatum, Chief Operating Officer of the NBA

Which strategies are being adopted in response to this disruption?

Teams, leagues, and media outfits have swung into action to meet needs of the biggest contributor of sports – 'The Fan'. The underlying business concern is to better understand the future of the sports fan once live action is back. How can we engage with them? With the help of rich data and advanced analytics, league and teams can enhance the fan experience. Below are some ideas which can help in enhancing the fan experience:

Online Customer Engagement: The industry is trying to capitalize on the spike in media consumption by finding new ways to engage with consumers. In the absence of live games, they are deepening the pool of content available to fans. By using data analytics, we can help teams in ranking their best matches. For example, sports broadcasters such as ESPN and Fox Sports use data analytics to choose best games, documentaries, esports and niche

competitions in a bid to keep consumers watching.

Flexible payment option: Another approach is to increase flexibility of payment options for consumers seeking sports content. By using rich data, we can help teams to redesign their content (sequence matches, documentaries) and subscription. NBA and Turner Sports have removed the paywall for their joint streaming subscription service, League Pass. Major League Baseball is doing the same, offering its archive of games for free on MLB.TV and YouTube.

Fans want news: New players and big announcements are an important way to bring fans into the fold. There has been a high volume of tweets and retweets of big sporting news stories on social media by fans, which hypes the excitement for the new season ahead.

Evolving role of data analytics team as a valued business partner

Given the way sports industry has embraced analytics in every area relating to players, fans, and business operations, it is easy to predict that the adoption of analytics is set for growth in this sector.

Online Campaign analytics on prospect fans:

Based on individual or state demographics, social media, mobile application usage data and other third-party data, we can find patterns and create segments. Within the fans base, we can run campaigns on targeted groups. Knowing factors which attracts the fans most, team management can focus on improving that aspect which can lead to retaining and gaining fan base

- Fan database creation: Use third party data provider and social media pages to create fan database.
- Merchandise sales uptick: Lookalike analysis identifies people who look and act like target audience. Using data from social media and third-party web/mobile applications we can identify potential customers for sales.

Social listening: Keep track on your social media platforms for teams, players and matches related to team or organization. Then analyze these for insights to discover opportunities to act.

- Monitor social media channels for mentions of teams, players, matches, and keywords related to the sport.
- Aggregate data from official social media accounts and analyze information on ways to bring what you learn to work.
- Visualize the buzz words, trending topics in the form of dashboards.

Fate of the interrupted season

Research firm CivicScience asked an online panel of U.S. residents age 13 and older how they thought the NBA, the NHL and other sports leagues that suspended their seasons should proceed. The Pittsburgh-based group operates real-time, in-market reader surveys for hundreds of news outlets, content and social networks nationwide, generating over 80 million monthly answers to privacy-compliant polls.

[Play the full schedule](#)

18%

[Play a shortened schedule](#)

41%

[Cancel the seasons altogether](#)

26%

[No opinion](#)

16%

Note: Based on 4,023 online responses from March 10-16

Source: CivicScience • [Get the data](#)
• Created with [Datawrapper](#)

Analytics dashboards: A 'single source of truth' by creating an intelligent dashboard pack. Live tracking of online campaign data

- Dashboard can be built for team, fans, and staff management
- Teams and leagues gain a 360-degree understanding of the network of consumer relationships and fan sentiment.

Marketing Mix Modeling (MMM): By statistically analyzing past effects of features on sponsorship marketing, the future impact of various marketing strategies on sponsorship marketing can be estimated.

- Collect data from different agencies like Opta Sports and Sportradar

- Build model against your checklist.
- Model based business measure:
Analyze model output and find

effectiveness and flaws in the current campaign. This helps in identifying the best marketing mix for maximum ROI.

Conclusion

Nothing will be the same for fans in these tough times and there will be one-to-one communication between the organizations and the audience across digital channels. Not only for those who go to events, but also for those who regularly follow the sport from their homes. Developing a two-pronged approach,

wherein sports and team owners can use this opportunity to build new audiences and engage with fans a bit differently. Data driven approach is the key to differentiate during this time – organizations need to proactively understand the fan's behaviors to drive most appropriate engagement with them.

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