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MARKETING IN AMATEUR SPORTS: HOW TO MARKET A
FLOORBALL CLUB WITH LIMITED RESOURCES

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The purpose of this thesis is to identify the differences that appear in sports marketing in comparison to the more traditional fields of marketing, as well as the differences between marketing in amateur sports and professional sports. A Swedish amateur floorball team was consulted in order to gather information and to provide a practical example and development suggestions for the team's marketing communications. The findings implicate that there are vast differences between sports marketing and the more traditional types of marketing, but there are also a lot of principles that apply to sports marketing. The differences between amateur and professional sports marketing almost exclusively relate to the available resources. These differences shape the marketing planning process of sports entities, and sports marketing requires a different approach than the more traditional product and service industries.

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1 INTRODUCTION

Sports business is well known of its perpetual change, and is also one that has seen a significant growth during the recent decades. The industry has come a long way in a relatively short time, considering that the player wages are climbing higher and higher and endorsement deals alone are nowadays a multi-million business. Different kinds of sports events gather significant amounts of people daily, and the biggest brands in sports are known everywhere in the world. Nike, for example, is on the 18th place on the list of the world's most valuable brands published by Forbes, while another well-known sport goods manufacturer, Adidas, vacates the spot 83 (Website of the Forbes magazine 2015).

Although the two aforementioned old rivals are the only brands that can be easily identified as actors in the sports industry, both being manufacturers of sport products, they are not the only ones who gather significant profits from sports. One has to try hard to find an international sports event where no other brands on the list are visible, since most of them use the ever-increasing interest in sports to gain visibility. For example, copious amounts of sports teams' replica shirts are sold every year, and the teams are not the only ones gaining benefit from the sales.

According to Totalsportek.com (Website of Totalsportek 2015), Real Madrid sells 1,5 Million shirts a year, meaning that their shirt sponsor Fly Emirates gets the same amount of visible ads distributed with no greater effort, or without having anything to do with the manufacturing of the shirt. In the Euro League of basketball, the extent in which a sport entity is used as a marketing vehicle has been taken one step further. The league carries the name Turkish Airlines Euroleague, and some of the teams are named after one of their sponsors.

The increased use of sport entities as a marketing vehicle is much due to companies of today considering sports teams as a beneficial business asset, and some of them even decide to buy the team in order to clinch the main sponsorship. Red Bull, dubbed as an experience company selling energy drinks, has been expanding its franchise from organizing extreme sports events by acquiring sports teams in different

sports and leagues, such as Major League Soccer, Deutsche Eishockey Liga and perhaps most notably, two Formula 1 teams. So to say, companies are looking for opportunities to increase their exposure in an environment where consumers will notice them.

As the sports industry has grown, there has been a similar trend in studies examining the phenomena and principles in sports marketing as well. Most of the literature and previous research on the topic of sports marketing mainly focuses on major professional sports, and not so much on amateur sports. Although the two have a lot in common, there are some substantial differences resulting to the findings from professional sports not being applicable in amateur sports. Needless to say, there is a need for further research in amateur and niche sports marketing.

In this thesis, we will discuss the significant attributes of sports marketing when compared to other, more traditional fields of marketing. We will also go deeper in the field of sports marketing and study the distinguishing features of amateur sports and professional sports from a marketing perspective, and later on take the studied theories to the practical level, constructing a marketing plan for an amateur sports club.

In the second chapter, the methodology of this thesis is presented. It will answer the questions about why this thesis was written, and how the process was carried out.

The third chapter will take us through the peculiar nature of sports as a business, and how it affects the marketing in the planning phase. We will also discuss the most significant features that distinguish sports from the other industries.

In the fourth chapter, we will dig deeper under the surface of sports marketing, since every sport is not created equal and thus cannot be marketed in the same way. The focus is on the differences between professional and amateur sports, thus shedding a little light on how the resources and media exposure, or rather the lack of them, and other things affect the marketing planning in the amateur sports.

The fifth chapter will put the preceding two chapters to work, and take a practical approach to the planning process of an amateur sports team's marketing, as we will construct a marketing plan for a floorball club called Balrog B/S IK. The traditional club had no previous marketing plan, so it was a good time to have one built up.

2 METHODOLOGY

This thesis utilizes a grounded theory approach in the field of sports marketing, in order to find out what are the main differences in 1) sports marketing and the more traditional types of marketing, and 2) marketing a professional sports team and an amateur sports team. The theoretical aspects are used to develop some suggestions on how to handle the marketing communications of an amateur sports team, later putting the theories to use in constructing a marketing plan for a floorball club in a form of a case study.

The data was collected using empirical notions and a qualitative interview with the president of Balrog B/S IK.

While the data is polarized, the sample size being just one club, I believe it will best serve the needs of the club, allowing a tailor made plan for their marketing communications. Although some findings may apply to only the particular club in question, the majority of them can be found useful in a more general environment.

3 SPORTS MARKETING

Sports business is a game of its own. It could even be said in a simplified way that while the more traditional goods and services industries rely on making the best product on the market with the lowest possible cost or developing a service that almost unexceptionally results in a satisfied customer, in the sports industry that usually is just the beginning. The reason behind this is that the sports business works in a

way that distinguishes it from its more traditional counterparts. In this chapter we will discuss the distinctive features and their effect from the viewpoint of marketing, and examine the key concepts of sports marketing.

3.1 Distinctive features of sports business

3.1.1 Two levels of action and the unpredictable nature of sports business

Perhaps the most essential difference in between sports industry and the more traditional industries is that they operate in fairly different environments. In sports business virtually everything happens on two independent, yet mutually interacting levels: the economic and the athletic level, so to say on and off court. Although having a connection, these two levels only have an indirect effect to each other, since economic investments do not always convert to athletic success, and vice versa. From the two levels, the economic is far more controllable, since by creating a well-structured organization the effects caused by setbacks on the athletic side can be minimized. It is also the side that the sports marketers work on, and which they can affect and develop. Besides the small organizations where an employee can have several different roles, the marketers rarely make decisions on the athletic side. The two also are the building blocks in the image of the sports entities, and Tsotsou (2012) claims that "unlike other types of brands or services, the personality of a sport team is a combination of the image of its administration and personnel, the image of the team (players and coaches in and out of the field), and the image of its fans."

The two levels of action also lead to another peculiarity, which is the built in element of unpredictability. Unlike with products or services, there are only a certain amount of features that can be controlled or standardized. Sports business, in turn, is shaped by, and to some extent even built on the factor that the outcome of a competition or match can never be fully predicted. No matter how good an athlete or a team is, the opposition always has the chance to win. This means that a financially successful organization is not necessarily as successful in athletic terms. Houston Texans of the NFL, operating with the 5th highest revenue in the league (Website of the Forbes magazine 2014), are yet to appear in the Super Bowl, let alone win it. A winning

team does not necessarily boast the highest payroll and spectator amounts, and the team with the most fans in the stands is not necessarily the one on top of the league.

In a larger scale this means that a team that once was a dynasty-like team harvesting trophies can face a total collapse in a time period of only a couple of years, and go from winning trophies to relegating step by step to the lower divisions or even declaring bankruptcy. The effects of the uncertainty can be decreased with a well-structured organization and clear goals on both levels, but thus far a recipe for the ultimate team is yet to be found. The athletic part of a team's success might be less controllable, but there are ways to decrease the degree of uncontrollability and minimize its effects on the economic part. The parts interact, and oftentimes an improvement on one part leads to a possibility to improve on the other part as well. In terms of acquiring the best possible talent to a team, the team needs to be able to respond to the requirements the players have, both economically and in athletic terms.

In conclusion, the victory of an athlete or a team can never be guaranteed, and a league title cannot be bought. This unpredictability is one of the most significant features and is perhaps the one that shapes the sports business the most. In fact, it is so significant that there is a whole business built on said uncertainty: sports betting. This unpredictability also is one of the reasons the spectators choose sport events over other forms of entertainment.

3.1.2 Product

The article by Fullerton & Merz (2008) identifies the two aforementioned dimensions: sports products and non-sports products. The sports products can be divided into three categories; 1) Spectator sports, 2) Participation sports, and 3) Sporting goods and sports-related products. In the first category the emphasis is on the sports event as a product, and the access to the event via media or physical attendance is what is marketed. The second category focuses on marketing a specific sport, the primary goal being an increase in the number of people engaged in the sport, which in turn creates demand for the products in the third category, which includes the equipment used in sports and other products related to sports, such as merchandise.

In a broader definition, such as the one presented by Shank and Lyberger (2015), a sport product is “a good, a service, or any combination of the two that is designed to provide benefits to a sports spectator, participant, or sponsor.” By that definition, anything could be considered a sports product, if it is made with the sport customer in mind.

3.1.3 Consumers

Many companies providing products and services have clearly targeted customers. For example, a clothing manufacturer that has its own retail shops primarily has private persons as their customers. Shank and Lyberger (2015) divide the sports consumers to three different groups: spectators, participants, and businesses. Usually the offerings of a sports entity have customers from more than one of the groups, and each group is interested in the product for very different reasons. Each group should be taken into account when planning the marketing activities to effectively reach each of the groups, but with the core message staying the same, since sometimes one consumer can belong in multiple groups. In the case later on we will take a look at this matter in practice.

The two first groups consist of private persons, while businesses form the third group. The first group, spectators, are the people attending the matches of a given team, for example. The spectators might be the single most important group, considering that they mostly stand behind the demand for the events. The motivational driver for this group is the entertainment and social values of the event, and the sports events compete of the customers with the other entertainment options, as explained by Mason (1999). As Shank & Lyberger (2015) suggest, there would be no sports business were it not for the spectators. It is also worth noting that a person responsible for sponsorship decisions for a corporate consumer probably also tries to view the event from the perspective of a spectator in order to find out whether their advertisement would fit the event, so also in that sense this group is of great significance. The participants, then again, are the ones who participate in different sports events. The main motivation for this group is their own well-being and condition, and they are the ones that create the demand for the equipment. The members of this

group have a high likelihood to belong to the group of spectators as well, due to their interest in the sport. Nevertheless, the participants are important, described by Mihai (2013) as “the lifeblood of sport, as they become the next generation of champions and spectators”.

The business customers of sports products are a somewhat larger and a more diverse group, and by many considered to solely consist of sponsors. Sure, it is what is seen on the surface, and sponsorship deals are a big part of income for many events and teams, but there are also other types of businesses that can be customers for sports entities. TV companies battle for the broadcast rights, companies wanting to entertain their own customers compete for the box seats, and agencies fight for getting to represent the best athletes, just to name a few. As said, sponsors are the type of business customers that are most usually seen in association with sports entities, and we will cover the sponsorships later on.

3.2 Definition of sports marketing

American Marketing Association defines marketing as “the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large”(Website of the American Marketing Association 2013). Drawing up a definition of sports marketing, in turn, is not an easy task. Due to the ambiguity of the concept, there are several different definitions, as noted in the article by Fullerton and Merz (2008).

The problem with creating a clear definition is that sports as a business is one that relates and overlaps with many others, making it a challenging task to clearly state what is sports marketing and what, on the other hand, is not. Wakefield (2007, p.1) even notes that instead of considering sports marketing a special case of marketing, it could as well be the other way around. One of the most fitting definitions is the one by Shank and Lyberger (2015), according to which sports marketing is “the specific application of marketing principles and processes to sport products and to the marketing of non-sports products through association with sport”.

3.3 Differences between Sports Marketing and Goods/Services Marketing

There are quite a many differences between the more traditional goods and services marketing and sports marketing. Wakefield (2007, p.4) identifies ten dimensions with the clearest differences, as pictured in Table 1 below. The presented features outline the distinctive features that sports marketers work with. Not all of them, of course, are applicable to every possible sport or sports entity inside the industry, as every sport has their unique features creating distinct challenges in marketing, as agreed by Parker (2000), but they certainly provide a good overall view of the differences. Many of them go out from the starting point of big, broadcasted professional team sports, which is understandable since they are perhaps the most researched and in economic terms the biggest ones in the industry, but there is a lot more to the business than just the most lucrative sports. Some of the points, on the other hand, are applicable quite generally, and even fit the case presented later on in this thesis. Some of them, on the other hand, are becoming slightly out-dated, which lead to the creation of the top 5 Differences between Goods/Services Marketing and Sports Marketing, as pictured in Table 1.

Top 5 Differences between GSM and Sports Marketing			
Top 5	Dimension	Goods/Services	Sports entities
1	Fanship	Customers, repeat purchases	Fanatics, deeper identification
2	Competition	Individual branding in competitive markets	Coopetition
3	Facilities, promotion and media	Corporate owner pays for facilities and exposure	Fans, sponsors and media pay to promote team/event
4	Exchange	Principally economic exchange	Principally social exchange
5	Contractual power	Contractual power favors owners	Contractual power favors players

Table 1 - Top 5 Differences in GSM and Sports marketing – modified from Wakefield, K. (2007, p.4)

3.3.1 Fanship

As Mason (1999) points out, the relationship with customers is one of the most distinctive attributes of sports marketing. Wakefield (2007, p.5) also points out that building fan identification is the cornerstone of effective sports marketing. In sports marketing the consumers are considered rather as fanatics than mere customers, much due to the high level of adoption. This kind of phenomenon also appears in the music business, although with the difference that being a fan of a sports team usually excludes the possibility of being a fan of a competing sports team, whereas a person can identify oneself as a fan of several competing artists or bands.

Hunt et al. (1999) classify the fans to five different archetypes by their level of attachment to the sports product, in other words, the level of adoption. Whereas a customer buying a laundry detergent and not being happy with the results or the price is highly likely to change the brand they use, it does not quite go like that in sports. The consumers usually establish an emotional connection with the team they support, thus becoming attached with the team, as noted by Hunt et al. (1999). What sport consumers essentially want is to identify with a team or a league, according to Mason (1999). Becoming a fan of a sports team is usually a one-time event, since due to the adoption and emotional attachment it is hard to start rooting for a competing team in the same league, or even the same sport. Most of the sports fans tend to stick to their guns with their choice of team, no matter how bad the team is performing, since being a fan of a sports team has already become a part of the fan's identity. In addition, changing one's favourite team is highly frowned upon, if not even considered a betrayal of some sort. The basis of the will to identify as a fan of a given team is elevated self-esteem, as proposed by Carlson et al. (2009), as the fans seek to transfer the qualities of the team's identity to their own self-images. On the one hand it is about wanting to belong to a group with like-minded individuals, while on the other hand it is about wanting to differentiate, thus building one's self-image. The initiative attachment has many additional factors contributing to it, such as locality, social acceptance and family ties.

Also, due to the high adoption level of the product, in sports marketing price in itself rarely makes an effective selling point. Many fans would attend the games of their

favourite team regardless of the price instead of going to the competitor's game where the ticket prices are lower, unlike in a supermarket setting, where a buyer can choose between a multitude of different products and decide to take the cheapest one if the attributes of the products have no significant differences. They also are likely to change the brand they use if the product fails to live up to the expectations, or even go to a different supermarket if they get their products for a cheaper price. In sports, the level of brand adoption is significantly higher, Wakefield (2007, p.4) even states it "goes beyond mere loyalty".

3.3.2 Coopetition

Another significant difference in comparison to its more traditional counterparts is the nature of competition in sports. Benjits et al. (2011) present sport leagues as intentionally developed business networks (IDBNs), which have their own quirks. Most of the sport leagues are obligatory in the sense that teams which earn the promotion to a higher league in athletic terms, are automatically considered being in the network economically as well. This adds a pinch of instability and unpredictability in the longer term, since every season there is at least one team exiting and one team entering the network. It is also worth noting that the other actors in the network have no power on deciding which the entering and exiting actors are, since the promotions and relegations are decided on athletic terms. Some professional leagues, though, such as the "Big 4" in the United States (NHL, NFL, NBA, MLB) do not utilize such system, and new teams only enter the leagues via expansion or relocation of an existing team, offering a more stable economic environment.

The IDBNs also include a special form of competition, in which the teams compete against each other individually both on and off the field, but also co-operate in order to develop the league as a product, and this way developing the sport as a whole. So to say, all the parties benefit from both competition and co-operation, which lead Bengtsson and Kock (2000, according to Benjits et al., 2011) coining the term co-opetition.

3.3.3 Facilities, promotion and media

Sports' relationship with media is also quite different to that of the more traditional industries. Normally the owner of a given company would pay for the media to promote their offerings, but thanks to the people's interest in sports, the events are usually covered in newspapers and television regularly, which serves as additional exposure for the teams and athletes. The same applies for the sponsors, who pay for the sports entities to have their logo or name associated with the event or team in some way to garner attention from the fans attending the event. In contrast to many other types of advertisements, the advertisements in a sports arena appear in an emotionally charged environment, which makes them unique (Turley & Shannon, 2000). Some sponsors are even willing to go further, and for example build an arena in cooperation with a team, thus gaining the naming rights for the arena. It is not common in sports that the team owns the premises they practice and compete in, but the corporate sponsors or municipalities are the ones that hold the rights to the venues. In some cases the stadium is owned by the same owner as the team, which gives the team more control over the additional revenue streams such as income from kiosks and the parking lot.

3.3.4 Exchange

One of the significant attributes of sports business is the social aspect. People very rarely go to sports matches alone, as Wakefield (2007, p.11) suggests. Most products and services can be consumed alone, and the main purpose for the purchase is to fulfil a need in exchange for money. In this dimension sports resemble entertainment and experiences, as the exchange is primarily social, since the purchase is based on the experience, and other people attending the match affect the experience as well. Wakefield (2007, p.11) also points out that in the sports events the large crowds tend to affect in a positive way psychologically. Attending a sports event, or a concert for that matter, also equals giving up one's time, since attending excludes the possibility of attending another match at the same time. So to say, the exchange, although also paying for the tickets, is primarily not about money.

3.3.5 Contractual power

The last point in our top 5 is the contractual power. In the more traditional industries, the employees do not have the same kind of effect on the outcome or the brand as the players of a sports team. A star player leaving the team usually has a negative effect on the attendance rates, as well as the athletic results, whereas in a fast food restaurant an employee leaving does not necessarily have any kind of effect on the sales. This leads to the players having a contractual power over the owners, which can be seen in the athlete's wages. It is also worth noting that this mostly applies to the employees that affect the on-court results, i.e. the players, managers and such, not the marketing or sales departments, which work more in the traditional way. Considering that the athletes are also public figures that are being followed by fans and media closely, which restricts their lives in ways even after their career has ended the contractual leverage seems quite fair.

3.4 Sponsorship

Another interesting feature in the sports industry is sponsorship, which can be considered as one type of marketing through sports, but its significance for the industry goes beyond that, and besides being a major revenue stream for sports events and teams, it is also one of the reasons why Nike is one of the most recognized brands in the world. Sponsorship is one of the forms of marketing that previously was considered specific for sports, but other industries are increasingly adopting the concept as well. By sponsorship is meant the act of a consumer gaining the right to associate its name, logo or product with a sports entity in order to create a competitive advantage for both involved parties, as explained by Shank and Lyberger (2015). Sponsorship is not to be confused with endorsement, although they have many similar features. In sponsorship the agreement is usually more binding and exclusive, whereas a public figure may endorse two competitive products or brands. A company may also sponsor entities on different levels; for example Nike sponsors individual athletes, teams, events, and even national sport federations. Endorsement deals, on the other hand, are usually between a company and a single person, and is not as limited to sports.

Sponsorship is a powerful tool in heightening the brand value of both parties, and the end of an athlete's career is not necessarily the end of the sponsorship, as noted by Shank and Lyberger (2015). Besides being considered by many as the greatest basketball player of all time, Michael Jordan makes a standout example when it comes to sponsorship deals. He originally signed a sponsorship deal with Nike in 1984, but just after a year on the professional courts Nike ended up giving him his own shoe line. Said shoe line was later on expanded to a whole new brand, which became so popular that even after Jordan's final retirement from playing in 2003 the shoes are sold in spectacular amounts making sure that Jordan, both the brand and the man, are still known around the world.

In the more traditional model of sponsorship, companies invest in teams' success, and expect to gain value through the identification as a sponsor of a winning team. Nowadays it is somewhat different. With the constant access to information and rapid spreading of different stories, teams will also be noticed without success, which in turn brings more visibility to the sponsoring company as well. On the other hand, the mere success does not quite cut it anymore in terms of value provided to the sponsors, and teams have to find other ways to make it worthwhile for the sponsors. Corporate consumers are increasingly acknowledging the need of getting something concrete in return. Many businesses supporting athletes or teams are increasingly recognizing both the value of sponsorship, and the importance of ROI from the sponsorship deals.

There is no doubt that well utilized marketing has made the likes of NBA and NFL the economic and athletic powerhouses they are today. For example Super Bowl is perhaps the most followed annually organized sports event, and the half time advertisement slots are considered the most wanted (and proportionally expensive) slots of them all. In 2015, the event gathered 70,288 spectators and estimated 168 million viewers around the world. According to Adweek.com (Website of Adweek 2015), "each 30-second slot for the Feb. 1 game is going for a record \$4.4 to \$4.5 million, depending on how many spots the brand is buying", the cost per second being at \$150,000. The event was widely discussed in the social media; according to CNN Money, "over 28.4 million tweets related to the game and halftime show were sent during the live telecast" (Website of CNN Money 2015).

4 AMATEUR SPORTS VERSUS PROFESSIONAL SPORTS

For some athletes the amateur leagues serve just as a springboard to the pros, for some it is an idealistic matter, and for some it is a sacrifice they have to make in order to compete in the sport they love. In the previous chapter we scraped the tip of the iceberg that is sports marketing. In this chapter we will step away from the bright lights, media exposure and player salaries, and focus on amateur sports.

4.1 Amateur sports

Amateur sports business, in many ways, resembles professional sports business. By definition, the only difference is that amateur athletes do not receive compensation for competing in the sport. As is the case for many sports and sports organizations nowadays, being an amateur athlete is rather based on the economical aspects than ideal matters. There are exceptions on the rule, with sports such as boxing and wrestling still having a strict policy against professionals competing in the Olympic games, and the NCAA prohibiting college athletes from receiving payment for competing or endorsing products. In this thesis the term amateur sports is used when referring to sports where the competitors do not receive compensation that would enable them to train full-time with their primary income coming from competing in said sport. This definition also includes semi-professional athletes and sports, but considering that economically they have more characteristics in common with amateur sports than professional sports, the inclusion is justifiable. In addition, given that the amateur aspect in for example NCAA is mainly ideological and it in many other ways works more like professional organizations, the findings may not apply to such instances. The main focus, though, remains on amateur sports. In this chapter we will examine the distinguishing characteristics of amateur sports that shape and affect the marketing planning process in amateur sports.

4.2 Negative effects of limited resources

Of all things shaping the amateur sports business, the one that makes the biggest effect is money. In the end all issues seem to be connected to the money, or lack thereof, in the business. As mentioned before, the most significant difference between amateur and professional sports is the monetary compensation that allows the professionals to practice their sport full-time. In many amateur sports the players, or even coaches for that matter, do not receive any monetary compensation for the work they put in, and if they do, it rarely is of significant value and the main purpose of it is to cover the expenses caused by practising or instructing the sport. Sometimes the compensation may not even be monetary, but comes in the form of equipment or services, with the purpose of lowering the expenses the athlete faces. The difference is one of a quite great magnitude when compared to professional sports, where the athletes usually are compensated separately for competing and success, and may even get paid for using the equipment of their choice in the form of a sponsorship deal.

The sponsorship deals in most amateur sport clubs account for the biggest part of the revenue and obviously a big investment from a sponsor, or a new sponsorship deal for that matter, can make a big difference in how much the club has funds to use. Amateur clubs oftentimes have to get by with the available resources, and developing the organization usually needs some funds to power it. That being said, if a club can get no additional funds, the organization will not develop in the economic terms.

Besides the athletes' paychecks, money is heavily involved in the difference between amateur and professional sports. Many amateur sports organizations lack the monetary resources to hire full-time or even part-time personnel, and instead are run by people who do not necessarily have the competence or the time needed to do it professionally. Even if the organizations have the resources to hire full-time employees, they may still face a lack of funds preventing the personnel from using their full potential and are instead trying to work with strictly limited resources, and covering more than one post in the organization. The organizations are relatively small, and the teams in a sports club for example are run as individual units on the economic side.

Considering that the teams competing in a league create a network in which they co-operate in order to develop the league and the sport better, there usually are some limitations regarding the level that an individual team can achieve. The limitations are sometimes caused by the other actors in the network, and sometimes even the top-level organization. Besides marketing their own events, the teams have the responsibility of marketing the league and the sport as a product as well, and the league has the responsibility of marketing the sport and the teams competing in the league. This is sometimes hard for lower-tier leagues organized by national federations, since the marketing efforts of the top-level organization usually focus on marketing the national teams and the top-tier leagues.

Not being a professional does not necessarily mean that things could not be done professionally, but there is a vast variation in the motivational levels inside a league, and even inside a team. Since the sport is not the primary income for the athletes, meaning that the sport can be considered as a hobby, every athlete does not have the same level of commitment to the sport since the return on the invested time and other resources may not be worth the extra push.

The amateur athletes often face a tough situation, since they can't afford to focus solely on the sport, because it does not make a living. This means that the athletes have to have a backup plan, and they study or work full-time, which means that they have to make compromises on their aspirations either in work life or sports to keep on doing both. This may lead to the athletes' careers ending before they even hit their prime. Also, the glory of the athletes' lives that is portrayed by media is quite far from the reality the amateur athletes face, since combining a full time job and practising sports as professionally as possible is rarely just rainbows and butterflies.

4.3 Positive effects of limited resources

Although the limited resources have their downsides, they also have positive effects. Since the athletes do not have the possibility to pursue their goals with their primary income coming from sports, the athletes need to have a full time job. For some of the athletes their day jobs are merely a means to make the ends meet, a way to make it

possible to practice the sport they desire. Some of them, on the other hand, will rather make compromises in the athletic terms to advance in their career outside the field. Either way, the athletes having day jobs is an important factor in creating a deeper connection with the fans. A person working with an athlete may become interested in the sport, and go to see his co-worker perform. The athlete working in the same company is also almost unexceptionally considered one of their own, and the halo effect helps to transfer the connection to team level as well. The athletes having day jobs also makes them easier to relate to. They are viewed as “regular Joes” who have decided to commit to sports in their spare time. They also serve as better role models for youngsters, since they have not given up on education or working because of sports.

Because of the life outside the sport dictating the decisions the athletes make, the amateur athletes also tend to represent the same clubs for a longer time than in professional sports, where the players can be sold and loaned out to other teams. Players not changing teams every season leads to the players developing a bond with their team, which in turn contributes in the way of fan identification. Some players may play their whole careers for a team they originally started playing in, which helps the fans to develop an attachment with the player, and the halo effect may transfer the attachment to the team level. Also, due to the switching of teams being more uncommon than in professional sports, the teams have more so called home-grown players, who are products of their own junior organization, or at least from the hometown of the team, which also gives a boost to fan identification. This also helps the junior organization develop, since the team needs to have a certain amount of own products in order to keep a sufficient amount of players in the roster.

The lack of resources causes the amateur sports entities having to think about the resources more than their professional counterparts. If something needs to be done, but there are no resources for it, a solution must be found. Amateur organizations tend to wind up in these kinds of situations, and these situations are how innovative ways of doing things are created. The smaller organization size also makes running the organization easier, and the smaller organizations tend to be more flexible in adjusting to changes.

4.4 Media exposure and narrowcasting

It is relatively rare that amateur sports are broadcasted on pay-per view channels, or even nationally broadcasted channels, since the amateur sports do not have the same kind of interest as their professional counterparts. This means that the sports have neither the income source generated by broadcasting deals, nor the visibility for their sponsors that would be achieved with regular broadcasting. In addition, the fans do not have the possibility to see their favourite athletes compete, while still staying in the comfort of their homes.

Some teams and event organizers have responded to the lack of media coverage by taking the matters in their own hands by broadcasting their events on video streaming websites, such as Youtube. This allows the fans to follow the efforts of their favourite athletes when they do not have the possibility of physically attending the event. Shank and Lyberger (2015) call this method of broadcasting to a specific audience "narrowcasting", and note that it may be where sports media is heading, while Robinson and France (2011) note that in order to become more professional, the change in media coverage is what amateur sports need.

The upsides of narrowcasting are quite obvious: it serves as an effective way to reach the target audience and allows the broadcast to be tailor made to the teams' or events' requirements and preferences. It also gives more exposure for the sponsors, which makes the product more desirable in their eyes in comparison to an event where only the people attending the event can see the sponsor's advertisement. As usual, the downsides are heavily related to the resources, since starting to broadcast the events means that additional resources are needed. There is the need for equipment, and people running the broadcast. The production can of course be outsourced, which makes the need for additional resources mainly monetary. It can also be argued that the broadcasts compete with physically attending the match, but considering that many people want to share the experience, the competition is not of significant magnitude.

4.5 Merchandise

While it can be stated that for the professional sports entities merchandise is a way to increase revenue streams and visibility at the same time, the reality for amateur sports entities is one of the different kind. Whereas the likes of Manchester United and Barcelona have that kind of status that makes even the less dedicated fans wanting to wear even slightly pricier garments decorated with the club emblem, the amateur sport teams find themselves in a different situation. The amateur teams rarely boast such fanbases, which makes it unfeasible to mass produce the club merchandise, thus heightening the cost of the products, which in turn can affect the purchase decision made by a fan. To set the price so that the fan do not consider the products too pricy, sometimes the entity has to compromise on the profit to gain the visibility which can be achieved with the merchandise. Cutting from the manufacturing costs, in turn, may prove fatal, since they tend to go hand in hand with the quality and design of the product. First and foremost, the purpose of merchandise in amateur sports is to gain visibility for the entity, which in turn can be gained only by designing the merchandise in a way that the clothing is worn outside the stadium. Merchandise that is not visible anywhere else than the places where it is sold, is the equivalent of not having any merchandise at all.

4.6 Sponsorships

As discussed before, many amateur sports teams and organizations fund their operations primarily with money coming from sponsorship deals. From the viewpoint of the sponsors, the amateur entities may not seem as desirable as the professional ones, since the exposure is not of a similar size. However, the sheer visibility does not necessarily convert as sales figures for the sponsoring company. As noted by Turley and Shannon (2000), the advertisements in sports arenas compete with many other stimuli, thus making it hard to capture the attention of a fan. It is also worth noting that despite the lesser media attention, the amateur sports may have something equally valuable in store for the sponsors, as Greenhalgh and Greenwell (2013) suggest.

As Robinson and France (2011) suggest, every sport has a target of fans, and instead of trying to reach just about any sport fans, companies may want to seek specific types of people. Amateur sports provide the companies an opportunity to market to a particular target market, which, according to Greenhalgh and Greenwell (2013), the sponsors sponsoring niche sports seem to appreciate. In addition to the more specifically targeted audience, amateur sports entities may also provide a better fit with the image of the sponsoring company than professional sports entities. However, the amateur entities must be aware of their own offerings when pitching their deal to the potential sponsors, and offer a good and well-structured package, as Rennie (2010) notes. It all comes down to one question: What does the sports entity have to offer for their sponsors? Companies that engage in sponsoring are increasingly aware of the possibilities the sponsorship can create to them, and even more of what they can receive in return. As Greenhalgh and Greenwell (2013) note, it is about business, not charity.

4.7 Special attributes of floorball

To provide some crucial background information about the sport the case organization is involved in, we will discuss the attributes of floorball that should be taken to account in the planning phase. Floorball, having been around from the latter half of the 20th century, is a relatively young sport. The International Floorball Federation (IFF) was founded in 1986, and after almost 30 years, its member organizations have over 300 000 licensed members (Website of the International Floorball Federation 2015). Due to its young age, one could state that the sport is still in its development phase, and has not found its place in the sports world yet.

From the perspective of marketing, floorball has quite a bit of distinct qualities that can be used in marketing communications. Being a fast-paced contact sport, floorball requires skill and physical prowess at the same time, which makes it quite entertaining. It is also quite easy to learn, since the basic idea of the game is simple. It resembles ice hockey, which makes it easier to get acquainted with for people who have previous experiences of ice hockey. A lot of goals are scored, which alone contributes to the entertainment value, but it also adds to the suspense that the spectators

experience. A two-goal lead, for example, cannot be considered a safe one, since numerous goals can be scored in a very short time. Case in point, the fastest three consecutive goals scored by the same player in Salibandyliiga, the Finnish top flight, were made in the timeframe of mere 70 seconds. In addition to goals being scored like there was no tomorrow, the sport also provides the spectators with a whole lot of highlights, due to the game speed and the rules which put more weight on skill than pure physical prowess. The players are also easily recognizable, since apart from the goalkeepers, the players do not wear helmets. Unlike some other sports, in floorball there are no closed series, meaning that every season there is a “new kid in town” after the relegations and promotions. This policy is good in the athletic terms, but serves as an additional challenge in the economic terms. Geographically based rivalries no longer exist for a team if suddenly the nearest opponent is 150 kilometres away.

The sport being a relatively young one has both its advantages and disadvantages. Floorball has not yet gained the same kind of status that for example ice hockey has, and there are no life-long fans yet. So to say, floorball is yet to become a traditional sport, with more than two generations of spectators and players that have grown up playing the sport. The first generation of players that have started floorball as their first sport is still active. The sport, having been in the development phase in the age of several technological breakthroughs and specifically the emergence of social media, is somewhat more flexible to adjust to the new technologies since as a “small” sport the people marketing it have always been forced to find the new technologies to stay ahead of the competition. In addition, there are not many policies and practices that are engraved in stone, and there are relatively few matters where the argument “but this has always been done this way” is applicable. Floorball is a quite popular sport measured in the amount of participants, and in the countries more accustomed to floorball the sport is included in the physical education classes. The popularity does not convert directly to the attendance rates, but it shows that there is potential.

5 DATA COLLECTION AND CASE BALROG

As explained before, there are many things to consider when planning the marketing operations for an amateur sports club. There are attributes that appear in sports on a general level, and in addition to that, every club has their own specialities that affect the planning process. In this chapter we will take the theories presented earlier on and put them to work, reflecting them on an amateur sports club called Balrog B/S IK, and suggest improvements to their existing processes.

5.1 Data collection

The case study was carried out by reflecting on the theories presented earlier, and combining them with empirical data. In order to gain more information on the case company, additional data was collected by a qualitative interview with the president of Balrog B/S IK, Thony Andersson. He has been in the club from the very beginning, and therefore has witnessed the club's journey from the first meeting to the top of the sport, and later on the fall from glory. A transcript of the interview can be found in the appendices.

5.2 Balrog B/S IK

Balrog B/S IK (hereinafter Balrog), founded in 1984, is a floorball club from Botkyrka, a southern suburb of Stockholm. Measured in both women's and men's national and international titles, it is one of the most successful clubs in the history of floorball. What started out as a group of friends playing sports soon became a giant in a rapidly growing sport. The men's team had a reputation as a team that is hard to beat, and they complemented the reputation with unique clothing style and self-confidence. A floorball phenomenon was born, and the boys from the concrete jungle were the team to remember from the 90's. They were the first floorball team to appear on the cover of Buster, a Swedish sport magazine, and the TV advert made with Nike boosted the team's fame. Going to the 2010's, however, the days of glory slowly started fading away. The women's team was adopted by a local competitor, which left the men's team as the only team to wear the traditional black and white jerseys.

As a conclusion to the season 2011/2012, the men's team ended the 21 years long journey in the limelight as the team was relegated to Allsvenskan, where they have been playing ever since. In competitive sports, aiming higher is of essence, and Balrog is no exception in that rule. Thus, it probably does not come as a big surprise that the team's goal is to get back to where it belongs, the SSL (Svenska Superligan). In order to do that, the club needs to develop on both the athletic and the economic levels.

The club is named after a demon from J.R.R. Tolkien's Lord of the Rings –saga, which strengthens the image of being a fiend of the unbeatable kind. In the books Balrog was described as being a demon of the ancient world, and that it was beyond any opposition. The Tolkien-connection is also combined with the locality by using the catchphrase "Demonerna från Botkyrka (Demons from Botkyrka). The club evokes emotions, and due to its rich history, it is still the team to beat regardless of the league the team plays in.

5.3 Product

What is the product that Balrog offers? As discussed before, the offerings of a sports entity depend on the customer type. For private persons, the product is mainly the home matches of Balrog, so to say the club is selling experiences for the fans. When a fan purchases a ticket to a match, it is not just about the game, but also sharing the experience with the other fans attending the match and belonging to a community of fans.

For the sponsors, the product is the visibility that can be offered by associating the company's name with the team as well as its brand and events. As discussed earlier, there are ways for companies to benefit of sponsoring an amateur team, and the local companies have a good opportunity to make themselves visible for the local consumers by sponsoring local teams. It is worth noting that although the sponsorships make up for a great part of the team's revenue, the sponsors do not need to invest huge wads of money to notably increase their visibility. Many small streams make a big river, as the saying goes.

As is with other types of products, there usually is room for improvement, and the club should definitely try to make their core product better in order to make it more desirable for the fans and sponsors. In the core of this should be developing the match events to the level where a lost match would not spoil the fun, as they would always leave the premises after witnessing a well organized event with all the moments leading to and during the match produced with the customer in mind. Although the most important part of the product is the match in itself, additional entertainment would not hurt the fans' experience. Everything from the introduction of the home team to the intermissions could be done in a more entertaining way, and the intermissions pose as a possibility to have two 5-10 minutes long entertainment numbers in every match, and the entertainment can be almost anything from competitions to performances.

5.4 Competition

Being a second-tier amateur sports team located in a suburb of the capital city, it is clear that Balrog faces tough competition, since there are a lot of entertainment options in the area to choose from. The sports in particular are a well-represented field, as there are several elite clubs in different sports in the area. Even in the same series the competition for fans' attention is fierce, as there are six teams from the Stockholm county, one of which is even from the neighboring municipality. It is safe to state that all of the clubs wrestle with the same problem when it comes to the attendance, especially when looking into the average audience rates for the previous season (Website of Svenska Innebandyförbundet 2015). Could joining forces with another teams on the area be a solution? The cooperation does not necessarily have to be with the teams on the same league, or even same sport. Botkyrkahallen, the home of Balrog, also hosts one of the best futsal teams in the country, so why not have a bigger event together? The teams' seasons coincide, so it would be somewhat easy to arrange, and it would serve as a good way for the fans of both teams to become acquainted with the other sport as well. Another option could be an attempt to build the atmosphere of derby matches between the teams in the same league in cooperation

with them. Salems IF, the team from the neighbouring municipality, would be a perfect start in building the local prestige matches. The cooperation between the teams would not need to be obvious for the fans, and could appear in the form of a staged feud between the two clubs. A perceived rivalry would benefit the teams, and boost the interest in the league as well, since the rivalry between the clubs contributes heavily to the league product's appeal, as Mason (1999) suggests. As also discussed earlier, it is the responsibility of all the actors in the network to make the league product better.

5.5 Customers

The customers of Balrog are mainly the people and companies located in the area. At the moment, Balrog does not have a customer database, and to develop the product to better respond the customers' needs, the club should first find out who their customers are and what they want. Of course the companies that sponsor Balrog are kept tabs on, but when it comes to the fans, the situation is different. The club has no means of knowing who attend the matches regularly, for example, and aside from the people who have liked their page on Facebook, there is no data on the fans. Launching a season ticket could prove a worthy solution. The fans would save time on the ticket booth, and the club would get demographical information about their customers. The customers could also be contacted during the season to find out their thoughts on the match events. The club could also have competitions for the season ticket holders to add value for the purchase.

5.6 Objectives

The objectives for the marketing plan are to heighten Balrogs' brand, and to increase the fan identification, which in turn leads to increased attendance. The attendance is of essence in sports, and while the show goes on regardless of the attendance, it is still the fans that keep the spectator sports going. The relationship resembles the old adage; if a team wins a match without no audience seeing it, did it really happen? While heightening the brand and pursuing bigger audiences might seem as having an

effect only on the economic side, they also affect the athletic part. The increased revenue will allow the club to compensate their players better, and create possibilities to develop the organization, but together with big audiences it also makes it easier to lure talent to the club. It is hard to find an athlete who would rather compete with no audience than a sold out stand. The goal for the season is to reach over 300 in average attendance.

5.7 Sponsorship

Sponsorship is a powerful tool for gaining additional resources for the operations of a sports team. As discussed before, for many amateur sports teams the sponsorship deals make the most of the club's revenue, and keep the teams alive. As the companies are increasingly realizing the possibilities gained from sponsoring athletes and teams, they also are increasingly more aware about the nature of the exchange. Sponsoring is no more just an act of charity, since the companies want to receive something in return for their investments. In the 2014/15 season, Balrog had three main sponsors, all of which are closely related to the club. In addition, there were some smaller deals with companies that provided the club with clothing, equipment and other non-monetary benefits.

As the team continues its journey towards SSL, they will need additional resources to take their game to the next level, both on and off the field. However, it is not about getting on board all the sponsors they have to find, but more about finding the right sponsors that the club could create a long-term relationship with. Considering that Balrog is a team that represents the southern suburbs of Stockholm, they should definitely seek for local sponsors to strengthen the connection with their home grounds. The club also needs to think about how the potential sponsorships fit the image of the club. The club has three words of value: suburb, concrete, and attitude. These can be crudely translated to stand for locality, will to differentiate, and competitiveness. Considering this, a flower delivery company, for example, might not make the cut in the terms of a fitting sponsor. Local companies, however, would be a match made in heaven, and probably have a similar target market as well. A good example of cooperating with local companies could be Galagowear, a clothing company hailing from

Södertälje, the neighbouring municipality. The company focuses on urban street fashion, but floorball is not a totally unfamiliar sport for them as they already sponsor a team in the 4th division, which also bears their name. There would be a huge potential in creating the club merchandise together with Galagowear, since the company already knows how to make appealing clothes and headwear. This would mean increased visibility, not to mention an increased revenue stream for both of the parties.

The existing sponsors should not be forgotten, though. The club should try to find ways to make the cooperation even more beneficial to both parties. For example the municipality could use the players in their marketing material in order to lure in new inhabitants to the area, or to communicate that this is a municipality that support sports. A roadside billboard welcoming a traveler to “Botkyrka – the home of Balrog” does not sound too bad, does it?

To make sponsoring Balrog more appealing for the sponsors, the club could offer the companies a possibility to have a designated player in the match events. This kind of arrangement combines the elements of sponsoring an individual athlete and the team, and provides the company with a possibility to use the distinct traits of a given player in order to strengthen the image of their own product. For example, a player known for his speed could make a perfect fit with a delivery company. The company would get the right to associate their brand with the club outside the arena, but the form of in-game advertisements would instead of a logo in all the jerseys be a logo in the designated player’s jersey, and every time the player’s name is mentioned during the match, the company’s name would be mentioned in the same context. Another possibility would be to offer the sponsors to host the home matches, where they would get the possibility to make the fans more acquainted with their offerings. The company could have a stand at the arena where they could present their products, or have a competition at the intermissions, where the fans could have the possibility to win one of their products. The key in developing the product is to do it together with the customers, which means that the sponsors could appreciate the chance to affect the event their advertisements are shown in.

5.8 Channels

As an organization working with limited resources, and wanting to free up the available resources for other needs, Balrog should focus its marketing on different social media platforms and its website. It is a rather cost-effective option, but there is more to it than just cost-effectiveness. Using different social media platforms effectively reaches people that share connection with the sport, the team, or the players. What's more, it also provides the club with the possibility to connect with the fans, which is crucial in the largely social world of sports.

5.8.1 Balrog.com

In today's information society, the first thing people do when in need of information is a web search. Therefore, Balrog.com is the first thing about the club they encounter. The website should be the cornerstone of the online presence, a place where all the information about the team would be published. All the match reports and previews, as well as advertisements for the upcoming matches should be found on the website. The website can also serve as a so-called hub for all the activity in social media. With social media plug-ins in the sidebars all of the content posted in different platforms are visible on the website, thus making it easy to follow the efforts of the team and its players. The players' Twitter and Instagram handles can also be shared on the website, making it easy for the fans to follow their favourite players.

5.8.2 Twitter

Twitter is a good and fast way to communicate with the fans and people interested in the club. The posts, or tweets as they are called, are limited to 140 characters in length, so basically the longer bits of information may be better off published on other platforms. Partly due to the shorter posts, the frequency of posts is more important than in Facebook, in terms of visibility. With tools such as TweetDeck, the tweets can be scheduled to be published later, so with a pinch of planning an increase in activity can be achieved quite easily. Twitter provides a possibility to share photos,

videos and links as well, making it possible to create richer content. Sharing links to posts on other platforms makes the integration of the platforms easier. Since the feed in Twitter is not as tailored as Facebook's timeline, it allows for the tweets to be seen in real-time, thus enhancing the possibilities of interaction, since if your post is not seen, it will not be replied.

Twitter also provides a really good possibility for live feed from the team's matches, allowing the fans to interact regardless of whether they are attending the match or not. For a fan attending the match, it can add value as the fans can give their two cents on the match, and even participate in generating content in the form of sharing their photos and videos from the game. Together with the live feed updates by the club, this makes Twitter a really effective way to follow the match for the fans that are not attending. In addition, Twitter is also a good way to interact with the fans. The fans want to know more about their favourite players, and the club should respond to the demand with having their players take over the Twitter feed every now and then. Considering that the fans can give their two cents on the match or nearly whatever, the club account should try to encourage them do it even more in form of voting on topics such as who they want to be the next person interviewed or which jerseys should the team play in the next home game. An important aspect to consider is that the team needs to employ the same hashtags consistently, so the fans will find the content in an easy way. The hashtags can also be used as a catchphrase, for example hashtags like #viärbalrog (we are Balrog) and #forzabalrog can be seen as war cries as well as ways to share content.

5.8.3 Facebook

Facebook, in turn, should be somewhere in between the website and Twitter in terms of content, not least because it allows longer posts, and is still really popular among users. The upsides of Facebook include the possibility to create and share events, thus reminding the fans of the home matches, making it also possible for the fans to discuss the events before and after they occur in the event page. It also provides a good tool of sharing photos with the fans, and is easier to use than just posting all the photos on the website. In a way, it can act as an extension to the website, and doing it

in a more informal way. As well as in Twitter, the fans should be encouraged to create and share content with the team to get additional viewpoints from the matches, and to deepen fan identification. A good example of content that is suitable for Facebook is photos from the team's training sessions accompanied with an update from the team's latest week.

5.8.4 Instagram

One of the channels not currently utilized by Balrog, which should definitely be considered is Instagram. As the old proverb goes, a picture is worth more than a thousand words. Instagram works essentially in the same fashion as Twitter, but from a different starting point. In Twitter, the key content is written but can be complemented with pictures, whereas Instagram has it the other way around. The interaction is not as heavily emphasized in Instagram as in Twitter, so although it presents the team with a spectacular opportunity to get to know the team and its players and getting a sneak peek into their lives on and off the court, the fans are more in the viewers' role, with a possibility to comment on the photos. Instagram, due to its intimate and informal nature is an exquisite way for deepening the fans' identification with the athletes and the team. Many of the players also use Instagram, so it presents a possibility of creating and developing the players' personal brands in co-operation with them. Personal brands, in turn help in deepening the fans' identification with the team. They also help attracting non-fans, whom may later on become more permanent fans due to the halo effect described by Hunt et al. (1999). A good example of deepening the fan identification through a marketing message could be publishing photos of the players in their day jobs in order to promote the upcoming home match.

5.8.5 BalrogTV

As the team currently plays in the second tier, and only the highest tier has an existing broadcasting contract, in order to have the possibility for broadcasting the team should take the matter to its own hands via narrowcasting. This could be carried out either in the form of a Youtube channel, or other service providers, such as Solidtango, which some of the teams in the same division already do. This, though, requires

additional resources, so it probably should not be the first priority. Given the relatively low attendance, it is also probable that the online broadcasting would not necessarily give a good return on the investment. Although BalrogTV might not be a realistic option now, the club should definitely take it into consideration in the near future and try to find a solution with good cost/quality ratio. Besides narrowcasting the matches, BalrogTV would be a good channel for interviews and match advertisements.

5.8.6 Other channels

The more traditional channels should not be forgotten, though, since the club has co-operation partners with which a mutually beneficial co-operation can be considered. For example, the local newspaper could interview the players during the season, giving the paper something to write about, and the team a chance to gain more visibility in the community. Also, the physical presence is a good way to enhance the relationship with the fans. Balrog could go to the people, meaning that the players could make a physical appearance in the shopping centre nearby, prior to the home matches. Also, visiting the sponsors could be a way to pay back their support, and a way to market the home matches and strengthen the bond between the team and its sponsors. Amateur sports is about building a community and doing things together, so why not start by going to the people?

6 CONCLUSIONS

While many principles from the more traditional types of marketing can be applied to sports marketing, there are differences that have to be taken into account. While the two levels of action affect the decision making the most, from the perspective of marketing the fan identification is by far the most significant feature in sports marketing. Regarding amateur sports, the biggest difference to professional sports seems

to be the lack of resources, which shapes the functions of an amateur sports entity as a whole. It can also be stated that in the amateur sports the unpredictability of sports business has more effect to the economic part, due to the less stable organizations. The results of the case study are well applicable to the club in question, but in order to acquire more generally usable information, further study on amateur sports is required.

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APPENDIX 1

APPENDIX 1, INTERVIEW WITH THONY ANDERSSON

Q: How is marketing carried out in your club?

A: The club has never had a marketing strategy. The best marketing for the club have always been the results and the medals. It is time for a change now.

Q: What is the budget for marketing in the club?

A: I'm sad to say the budget has been closer to zero.

Q: What are the marketing channels being used?

A: Mostly Facebook and our Apps, plus some ads in our local newspaper.

Q: What are the marketing goals for the club?

A: Short term is quite boring. Right now the goal is to build up our reputation and continue to have a solid ground for our finance, and by doing so make sure that the players get their money on time. Long term: go back to being the best floorball club in the world. We have three leading words: 1. Suburb, 2. Concrete and 3. Attitude. That been said we need to do our homework and make sure that the players who will sign a contract with Balrog have the right profile and attitude.

Q: Who carries out the marketing in the club?

A: It is me as the Chairman of the board who is responsible for everything. Which also means that I try to build a new organization that will fit our future needs.

Q: Besides the personnel resources, what kind of other resources does the club use in its marketing?

A: This is hard to answer since we nearly don't do any marketing at the moment. The reason for that is a matter of resources, both financial and organizational.

Q: What do you see as the biggest challenges in marketing an amateur sports club in general, and your club in particular?

A: That is for sure to build a really good organization and even have enough money to be able to employ one Director/Marketing Manager to the club.

Q: What kind of added value your club can give to the sponsors?

A: We are still quite solid club for our region with a really successful history, but we need to seek and find a new way to reach out and by doing so be able to build new local interest for our games. Create new content so we sell out the arena each game.

Q: Does your club co-operate with other clubs in the area? If so, what kind of co-operation?

A: This year we will sign terms of collaboration with Tumba Goif who is another local club from the region. That means that we will be able to send players each way and by doing so make sure that each player will have the opportunity to develop their skills.

Q: What is the mission statement of Balrog?

A: We don't have any statement to day. We try to go back and use our 3 worlds as I wrote above. 1. Suburb, 2. Concrete and 3. Attitude.

Q: What is the vision of the club in 5 years?

A: We want to play in SSL again in 5 years. That is our goal.

Q: What measures have been taken in order to reach the vision?

A: The Swedish Floorball Federation will demand an Elite license in two years with hard finance goals for each and every club who will play in the top league. If you can't achieve this goal they will force you to play in some of the lower leagues or in worst case start all over. This means that you need to build a solid

ground to be able to fulfil our goal and play in the SSL. I'm sure we going to see a lot of floorball clubs that will be sent down to lower leagues or even go bankrupt. With everything above you can figure it out your self that focus is to start with the organization and take it step by step with the players to be able to reach our goal. I'm sure we can do this together if and when we solve the finance. It is a journey, but Balrog can and will do it.

Q: What is the role of sponsors in the day-to-day actions of the club?

A: I my self am one of Balrog's main sponsors (Dream8s, ed.note), the other two are our municipality (Botkyrka) and the biggest real estate company (Botkyrkabyggen) in our municipality, which is also owned by our municipality, Botkyrka.

Q: How big part of the revenue do the sponsors generate?

A: Around 95%.

Q: Which are the most important sponsors?

A: The three I just wrote about.