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**Marketing Literature Review**

**By Brennan Finley and Nick Vetro**

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**Professor Byl**

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**Marketing intramurals is vital to the success and sustainability of specific sport programs. There were common themes found through the out research articles and the first one was to be effective with marketing you must learn from other successful examples that relate to your program. In an article by Bodet (2009) he discusses how a rugby team was able to attract a large number of fans to their events all year long through various marketing approaches. He talks of planning, innovation, consistency of marketing management, and willingness to change common habits and approaches to business as key factors for the success of the clubs marketing strategy. A similar article by Kane (2002) discussed how a local baseball team promoted themselves in order to increase the number of fans that attended their games. Simple things like handing out surveys to find out why students do or do not attend games or making flyers and brochures available to students. Intramurals are usually only found out through word of mouth and if we can apply some of these examples to our services then increase participation may result.**

**A second theme found within the literature was the importance of looking to outside organizations to help with the delivery of the service. One way this could be done is through outsourcing certain marketing strategies. For example Burden and Li (2009) found that outsourcing, if done correctly, can be a very effective tool or a team or even intramurals. Outsourcing was found to help struggling baseball teams market themselves more effectively and in turn generate more participation. Along with outsourcing is creating positive sponsorships with outside businesses. In a study done by Calder, Harris, and Xu (1996) getting an outside partner can produce benefits for both sides. Once a sponsor can is shown that their company will be positively**

portrayed in the target markets community then a deal can be struck. This can help to reduce many barriers of participation that restrict students from being involved in intramurals. One huge example is cost. Many students cannot afford to play the intramurals they want because something like hockey costs over one hundred dollars. Although if a hockey related company wanted to sponsor the league then extra money could be invested in the program. This will result in both sides benefiting from the sponsorship and that is exactly what Calder, Harris, and Xu were able to portray in their study.

A third theme found was the ability of marketing to research international students and get them more involved in intramurals. Since Brock has such a large international student body this is a vital market that must be given attention. One tactic intramurals can use is ambush marketing which was discussed by Portlock (2009). If there is a big event international happening around Brock or even in St.Catharines that already has a main sponsor who paid money to be the sole sponsor we could use ambush marketing. We could find ways to sponsor our own cause (intramurals) at these events without having to pay a sponsorship fee and without breaking any laws. This way students may become more aware of our service and in turn create a desire to attend. Similarly Burns and Graefe (2005) found that the further away someone travels for a recreational experience, the more satisfaction they feel after completing it. If we are able to market high levels of satisfaction for these international students then they will attend more events and hopefully participate more in intramurals. A great example of this is creating a cricket league for intramurals. Cricket is an international sport not regularly played by western society. However since there is a large international

presences at Brock this sport can provided a very high level of satisfaction for its participants. Creating satisfaction within sport is key to its success and if international students can familiarize themselves with something then they will be likely to participatre.

The last theme we were able to find is how the overall marketing process is able to fit within intramurals and the promotion of its benefits. In an article by Karns (2005) he gives an overview of the changes within marketing during the past decade including the increased use of technology. It helps us understand more about the industry and how we can achieve maximum results. The article also talks about the challenges in which the industry face such as reduced resources, increased public scrutiny, and emphasis on learning outcomes. Intramurals is able to relate to these challenges and hopefully correct them. Another article by Fullerton and Merz (2008) goes through the five marketing steps including finding a target market, determining products, promotion, pricing and distribution. All of these can be applied to intramurals and an example would be attracting more international students to participate. We could tailor certain intramurals to their cultural preferences that may entice them to attend. This could be done via a survey or other means. Promotion could be done at various cultural events and we could locate info centers at the new ESL building. By placing information closer to our target market we are able to maximize the potential for success.

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### **Recommendations for Marketing Intramurals**

After reassessing both our literature review and five documents from other Canadian universities we came up with some recommendations to making marketing more effective for intramurals. Marketing is something that almost all the universities we researched did not take full advantage of. Therefore we decided to follow the five marketing steps outlined by Fullerton and Merz (2008) which include finding a target market, determining products, promotion, pricing and distribution. We came up with some creative ways to use marketing as a tool to increase intramural participation.

Target market is the group of people that you are trying to reach with your product. In our case it would be students of the respective school. In order to figure out exactly what our intended audience is we would hand out surveys throughout the school and in areas that highly populated with students. By doing this we are able to learn who wants to participate, who may consider participating and who does not want to. This way we can figure out what demographic groups are more interested and find ways to cater to their needs. Finding target markets is not a very difficult task however determining the products, or sports in this case, to be used by them can make your intramurals more successful.

One way to determine what intramurals students will enjoy is by looking at previous trends in sport participation to see what sports are more successful. This will help us understand which sports require more marketing efforts such as promotion and pricing. Another way we

can determine which intramurals to offer, similar to finding a target market, is by using surveys, opinion polls or voting booths. Surveys can provide us with specific information based on interests of participants such as when they prefer playing intramurals, which ones they get the most fulfillment out of and if they plan on participating again in the future. All of these strategies will help us figure out exactly which intramurals we plan to offer in the following years as well as which ones to terminate.

The third and most important marketing step that can increase intramural participation is promotion. By using good promotional strategies we are able to increase awareness of all programs being offered and convey to students what the benefits are. This may spark interest in intramurals by a student who never participated in the past. For example if someone wanted to become more engaged with the school and did not know how, they could read these benefits and change their mind about intramurals. Some more specific ways to promote intramurals is by utilizing news releases, brochures, info sheets, posters and flyers to the best of their ability. News releases can be a very effective marketing tool by stating who will participate in the intramurals, what intramurals will be offered, where the intramurals will be held, and finally when they will be taking place. This type of information being provided will give the participants a better understanding of the school's intramural program. Students who are more informed may decide to be more engaged. Brochures and information sheets also offer students with added information that may not have been outlined within the new release. These are not

always the most effective way to increase intramural participation, however they still act as a source of promotion for interested students. Another way to promote intramurals for students is by looking outside of the school itself in order to include off-campus students. One idea we had was to target large events that happen within the city which attract many students. One example in St. Catharines is the Grape and Wine Festival as most students are of legal age and attend this event. We believe that putting up posters and handing out flyers at these types of venues will increase the awareness of intramurals at the school and evidently provide more opportunities to get involved. A final way to promote intramurals is by offering price incentives for students. We thought that if a student brings in and signs up another student, who has not participated in intramurals before, then they would receive a discount on the overall cost of registering. Many students are on tight budgets and cost could be a barrier that is halting them from participating in intramurals. This type of promotion would first lower the costs as well as increase the total number of people involved in intramurals.

Another area of marketing that needs to be considered when offering intramurals to students is pricing. We touched on pricing before with price incentives however we felt that was more of a promotional tool. When we decide to open up a new intramural program that people have expressed interest in we may look at other schools that offer the same program and what they charge. This way we can develop a competitive price that is proven to be affordable to students. Another way we could create effective prices for intramurals is through market

pricing. This is when we figure out what our target market perceives as an acceptable price for the intramural. One strategy we came up with was to look at previous enrolment rates in specific intramurals. If one intramural had a low turnout rate we could decrease the price and see if more people sign up. Also if an intramural had a reasonably high turnout we could try to increase the price in order to make up for the not so popular intramurals.

The final step in marketing is distribution and the ability to accomplish a successful intramural program. Distribution is important because it defines the means used to get intramurals to the target market. One form of distribution we came up with was to use various organizations within the school. An example of this would be to use Recreation Services at Brock University to help hand out flyers and brochures to help promote intramurals. Another form of distribution for intramurals could be outside sport facilities that are within the surrounding community. This could be a very effective tool because sports like hockey and football are not offered at every school and in order to offer them as intramurals outside facilities will be needed. A last form of distribution that could relate to intramurals is the by developing some sort of partnership with the city the school is located in. This is a difficult task to achieve however if a partnership is made then the amount of facilities available to intramurals could increase drastically and in turn increase the amount of programs distributed as well as the number of people involved.

In conclusion marketing is something that every schools intramural program should utilize to its full potential in order to get more people involved and active. After looking at various schools intramural programs online it was clear that marketing was not a main concern for program effectiveness. Therefore we feel that if more schools followed the used marketing strategies such as finding a target market, determining the products/intramurals, promoting the programs, using effective pricing techniques and creative distributing tactics there would be endless possibilities to intramural success.

## Schools Used for Comparison

1. University of Ontario Institute of Technology
  - a. [www.uoit.ca](http://www.uoit.ca)
2. Carleton University
  - a. [www.carleton.ca](http://www.carleton.ca)
3. Mohawk College
  - a. [www.mohawkcollege.ca](http://www.mohawkcollege.ca)
4. Niagara College
  - a. [www.niagaracollege.ca](http://www.niagaracollege.ca)
5. University of Calgary
  - a. [www.ucalgary.ca](http://www.ucalgary.ca)