

ENHANCING FAN CONNECTION TO THE SEATTLE
SEAHAWKS THROUGH DIGITAL MEDIA



by

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Over the past year, I've worked with the Seattle Seahawks and University of Oregon for my honors thesis project that tackles how the Seahawks can enhance fan connection using digital media. Using Design Thinking as my guiding principle led to my solution. I ensured that the fans and their needs were at the forefront of my solution. Using interviews as my primary research, a key insight was that the majority of engaged fans were seeking a personalized on-field experience and that this type of interaction would be a critical driving force for them to better connect with the team. While providing an in-person experience isn't always feasible, it is possible to create a virtual experience within the digital media landscape. Utilizing 360-degree cameras with live streaming capabilities, I created a prototype and mock-up of what an integrated 360 live streamed experience could look like for fans on a gameday. Fans will get to choose which player they follow and what experience they want to see each week. This unique and personalized activation will give fans the ability to interact and customize their experience and then witness behind-the-scenes content live as it happens. By implementing this new creative approach, it will help integrate more fans into the gameday experience and hopefully translate to better connections with the Seattle Seahawks over time.

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Chapter 1: Project Description

Introduction

The Seattle Seahawks are a professional sports team in the National Football League (NFL). The Seahawks' players and coaching staff might be the face of the team and the product on the field, however behind the scenes there is a large team of over 100 front office employees making the organization function smoothly as a business. The front office ranges from player personnel, finance, corporate partnerships, and digital media, to gameday production (Seahawks.com).

As a sports marketing student and content creator, my passion is to work in digital media. I have experience with still and motion content, print materials, photography, and videography for a wide variety of sports brands like the University of Oregon Athletic Department (@GoDucks), the Boras Corporation, the Hillsboro Hops, the Sacramento Kings and ESPN. However, I've always been focused on the creation and haven't been exposed to the business side behind the content. As I continue working in the world of professional sports, I'm looking to be someone who can not only produce high-quality content, but also understand the strategy and be a problem-solver for an organization. Therefore, for this thesis I'll use the Seattle Seahawks' business objectives as a starting point and use Design Thinking to strategically problem solve and ultimately propose a creative solution with mock-ups for their business challenges.

Fortunately, I have the opportunity to learn from and work with the man who leads the Digital Media Department at the Seahawks, Kenton Olson. Kenton is the Director of Digital and Emerging Media and has over 11 years of digital media

experience with the Seahawks, and an additional five years working with the University of Oregon, and the Seattle Sounders FC. He currently oversees a team of producers, designers, video managers, reporters, and content managers to create and distribute digital content across all their web and social platforms. The team works together with the marketing department to formulate their ideas, apply, and create them. They also meet with corporate partners to discuss and strategize integrating their brands into Seahawks content.

One of the reasons I wanted to work with the Seahawks was that they view digital media as more than just engagement. Similar to any other professional sports team or business, the Seahawks have business objectives that need to be met in order for the organization and its owners to make a profit. Kenton's expertise is injecting business into how the Seahawks run and utilize their digital media platforms. He says that the fundamental difference between collegiate athletics and the professional sports leagues is that all digital communications must be achieving a business objective. There's a lot of purposeful strategy and intentionality behind everything they do and it's all with the goal to drive a profit.

Business Objectives

A common objective for any business is to sell tickets since this is one of the larger revenue sources for an organization. In the past five years, the Seahawks organization has seen a lot of success. However, fans were already fully engaged with the franchise before their first Super Bowl win in 2014. Since 2012, their 61,500 season tickets have been sold out with a 99.6% renewal rate (King 5 News). In addition, their waitlist filled up with 12,000 paid members and the overflow free notification waitlist

(for the primary waitlist) has about 58,000 members (Seattle Times). There is tremendous demand for these tickets despite the Seahawks demanding some of the most expensive average ticket prices; top three amongst all NFL teams (TicketIQ.com). Overall, it's safe to say that Century Link Field will be sold out for the extended future. Not all sports organizations have this luxury, and the benefit is that it frees up the organization to try to tackle a wider variety of business objectives.

The current business objectives for the Seattle Seahawks include the following:

- Increase recall of their work in the community
- **Connect with a broader base of fans**
- Create added inventory for their corporate sales team
- Maximize sales of dynamically priced ticket inventory

Primarily, I want to focus on solving how the Seahawks can better connect to a broader fan base. This is an objective worth exploring because as a sports franchise, fans are an integral part of the team's financial success. For the sports industry to maintain its status as socially and economically valuable, it is essential to turn casual spectators into lifelong fans who travel for games and financially demonstrate their continuous support for their team. The purpose of a professional sports team is to remain profitable while providing entertainment to an ever-expanding audience (Wilkins, Indiana University). Given my personal interest in digital media, I wanted to not only find a solution that better connects fans to the Seahawks, but also involves a solution utilizing my digital media skill set.

Seahawks Fan Base

As mentioned earlier, the Seahawks have a wealth of die-hard fans that want to attend every game possible. However, the Seahawks want to broaden and diversify their fan base. It is impossible to please every type of fan, so the Seahawks focus on building up a few particular types of fans each year with the majority of the content they send out.

Geographically, Seattle is one of the larger cities in the United States and has the advantage of a greater metropolitan area of over 3.5 million people (US News). With the Seahawks being the only football team in their region, their geographic reach is further extended and is seen as the “local” team for anyone in the state of Washington, Oregon, Idaho, and perhaps even Montana. This huge prospective fan base is attractive for a sports team because it allows for ample growth with limited competition. There will always be other entertainment alternatives including other local basketball, soccer, baseball sports teams, movies, and more. However, for professional football, the Seahawks can own and embrace the market and try to engage as many people as possible. While not everyone is going to be able to physically engage with the Seahawks at a practice or game, anyone, wherever they are in the United States, can always engage and connect via digital media through TV, web, or social media. The new advancement in technology and the Internet has opened new doors for fans to access their favorite team from wherever they are – this advancement has me intrigued for how my solution could serve not just locals, but any fan, anywhere.

Seahawks Fan Types

I learned it is vital to prioritize and self-identify your targeted fan types. The Seahawks, through in-house research, have targeted six core fan types that they strategically provide content to and engage with every year. Refer to **Figure 1** for a graphic summarizing all six fan types. Specifically, they’ve identified three overarching fan types: hardcore, engaged, and future. While these are for the Seahawks, it can be generalized across every organization. Hardcore fans are season ticket holders and football aficionados, so talking in-depth football strategy and providing player information will keep them engaged. Engaged fans are socialites and hometown fans that watch with their friends and have a proximity-based connection. Future fans are international fans and youth who might be making their decision to follow an NFL team for the first time.



Figure 1: Seahawks Fan Types

The Seahawks’ digital media department uses this chart against every piece of content they are about to share with the public. If the piece of content doesn’t align and help connect with at least one of these six fans, then they won’t use it. If it targets

multiple fan buckets at once; that's even better. However, it's important to point out that within digital media and the vast diversity of fans, it is impossible to please every type of fan with every single post. Kenton says that each year they're intentional with aligning to their business objectives and connecting with those particular fans best aligned with their objectives. Every interaction should map back to their business. The more they can focus on a particular fan type, the more they can increase awareness, the number of touch points, foster two-way interactions, and build a stronger and more meaningful relationship with that consumer.

Selection of the Engaged Fan

To go in-depth and create a quality solution that addresses the Seahawks' needs, I wanted to focus on just one fan type. I chose the engaged fan because I felt there was a lot of opportunity for the Seahawks to grow with this group. Many people are Seahawks fans, but just casually watching with a friend or family member. They engage with the team, but from a business prospective don't add much monetary value to an organization. As fans become more invested and committed to a team, they'll invest more financially by purchasing merchandise or attending a game, etc. I, too, was once an engaged fan of the Seahawks; simply watching games as a kid because my dad was watching. But now having grown into a die-hard fan, I was motivated and intrigued to pursue investigating how to convert the engaged fan.

Digital Media

Digital media is a very diverse department across all sports organizations. The goal of the digital media department is to supply content and information to the fans and

media. This can be through social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat or through owned properties like the team's website or mobile app.

However, it is important to acknowledge that this field is ever evolving as both technology and the way we interact digitally progresses. In 2007, when Kenton first joined the Seahawks organization, social media didn't exist. The department was mainly focused around the website and driving traffic to it. It wasn't until 2008 that social exploration started to emerge.

Social media in today's society is extremely popular. It was used by over 69% of all Americans in 2018 (Pew Research). Social provides businesses with the opportunity to reach potential consumers quickly, directly, and consistently. For many Americans, social is becoming a daily habit and Facebook daily usage occurs for about 75% of its users (Pew Research).

As an organization, it may seem tempting to focus all efforts into building a social media following, however, according to Kenton, that would be a naïve approach to digital communications as social is a very passive platform and it would be neglecting other forms of communication like websites or mobile apps. Maintaining a wide field of view when approaching and trying to solve one of the Seahawks' business objectives will be key to creating a comprehensive campaign strategy.

Chapter 2: Goals

There were three primary goals for my thesis:

- Understand the business strategy behind digital media
- Explore the best ways to leverage digital media and engage with fans
- Develop and propose a creative solution for the Seahawks

Chapter 3: Research Question

I explored the following research question:

How can the Seattle Seahawks utilize their digital media communication platforms to connect and broaden their fan base?

Chapter 4: Research Strategy

My solution involved a combination of two key methods of research: Design Thinking and primary research with interviews. Using Design Thinking as my framework, I developed an approach to understand the problem and ultimately create a solution. Within Design Thinking, understanding the user and empathizing with them was an integral first step. To effectively do that, I conducted in-person interviews to obtain direct feedback and input from self-identified Seahawks fans. From there, I continued the rest of the Design Thinking process to arrive at a unique creative solution for better connecting the Seahawks to a broadened fan base using digital media.

Design Thinking

My primary research strategy was centered on Design Thinking. Design Thinking is a process for creative problem solving. It has a human-centered core and encourages organizations to focus on the people they're creating for, which leads to better products, services, and internal processes (IDEOU). My primary thesis advisor, Nicole Wilson, is well versed in teaching design-thinking and providing consulting services. As an esteemed educator, she recommended this research process and also helped guide me through this process when needed. This was a good guiding strategy because this method, when utilized correctly, is known to surface unmet needs of the people you're creating for, reduce the risk associated with launching new ideas, and foster creativity and innovation (IDEOU). The Seahawks already have a tremendous and diverse fan base and employ smart and strategic methods to engage with them. My goal was to come up with innovative and new ideas to build on their existing work and continue to broaden their fan base.

There are four principles of Design Thinking that are the foundation of this strategy:

1. *The human rule* places all design in a social construct and reinforces the need for a human-centric point of view. This looks like keeping the fans in mind when designing new ways to engage with them.

2. *The ambiguity rule* is that ambiguity is inevitable; the problem can't be removed or simplified. The Seahawks could have a million different ways to reach new fans, so it's important to experiment at the limits of my knowledge and ability in order to see things differently.

3. *The redesign rule* is that although technology and social circumstances may evolve, basic human need is unchanged and thus we simply redesign as a means of fulfilling our needs and outcomes. Perhaps, looking externally there are good solutions already being done elsewhere in the sports world or even beyond the sports realm.

4. *The tangibility rule* is all about making ideas tangible in the form of prototypes to communicate ideas more effectively. Creating mock-ups for social campaigns or marketing events so there is a visual representation of the ideas can be one way to achieve this.

Based on these principles, my Design Thinking process roughly followed the five phases shown in Figure 2.

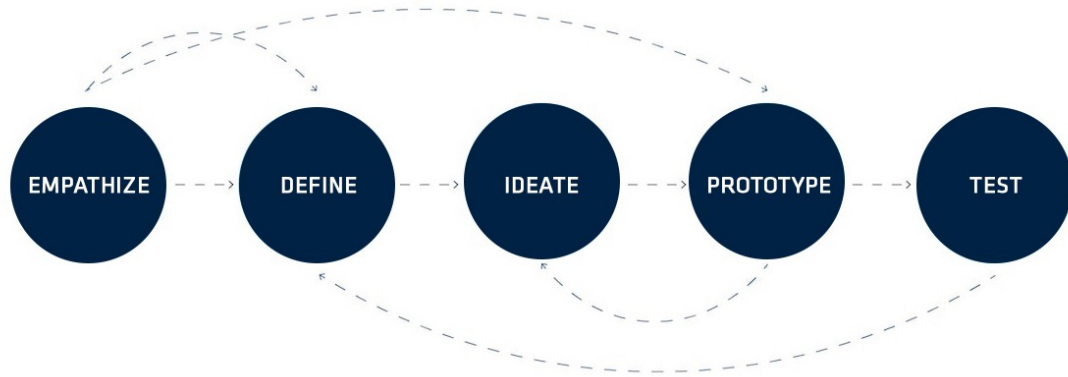


Figure 2: Five Phases of the Design Thinking Process

Empathize: This is the critical starting point for the entire process. I familiarized myself with the types of fans that currently engage with the Seahawks, and also the different types of fans that don't, but might be interested in doing so. Since every fan is slightly different, it was important to understand their individual wants, needs, and objectives. While in this phase, it was key to set aside my own assumptions and gather real insights about the different potential fan bases.

Define: This is all about defining the problem. I gathered my findings from the Empathize phase and made sense of them. Some questions I asked were, "what barriers are fans running up against? What patterns do I observe? Is there a big problem in reaching and communicating with a particular type of fan?" Ultimately, by the end of this phase, I formed a clear problem statement to base my solutions and ideas on.

Ideate: Here is where I started working on potential solutions. It was tempting to think of unique and creative ways to engage with fans initially, however having this deeper understanding of what was happening ultimately produced better ideas that hit more at the core of what was going on. I brainstormed and used other methods of ideation to create a wide list of solutions. Simply listing out each solution was the best strategy because I didn't want to limit my thinking by being overly judgmental or

critical of each idea. Towards the end of this phase, I narrowed it down to a few of the best ideas and moved forward with them.

Prototype: Prototyping is all about experimentation and turning ideas into visual or tangible concepts. This was an important step because physically looking at a social media campaign or marketing piece helped bring out any flaws or constraints with the concept. I continually accepted, improved, redesigned and rejected various ideas to arrive at the best solution possible.

Test: Testing is typically simultaneous with prototyping to avoid expending too much effort on a concept only to find a major flaw later on. Concepts can be tested with prospective fans to see if it creates engagement. Then, based on feedback, can continue to be innovated and adjusted as needed.

Although I listed these 5 steps in a logical sequence, the process is actually not linear. Design Thinking is meant to be flexible and fluid, where I look back and continually rethink and redefine what I've done (CareerFoundry). As I progressed throughout the different phases, I worked with Kenton and Nicole to ultimately arrive at a solution that the Seahawks could potentially implement and successfully broaden their fan base heading into their 2020 season.

Interviews

Executing 20 in-person interviews helped me empathize with Seahawks fans. Having that phone call or face-to-face talk allowed me to hear personalized feedback and ask specific questions to really understand Seahawks fans. The extensive list of interview questions can be viewed in Appendix A.

Living in Eugene, Oregon, I executed convenience sampling in which I asked students who attend the University of Oregon or family and friends from the Oregon and Washington areas. This type of sampling, although not perfect, provided good insights and allowed me to properly empathize with Seahawks fans.

Specifically, I learned about the engaged fan type because a lot of the college students I spoke with only liked the team due to physical proximity and friends or family liking the team. Hearing their unique perspective and understanding helped to find a creative solution to convert them into becoming an invested fan. While there are six overall fan types, my research and solution was primarily focused on delivering a strategy that can better connect with the engaged fan type because they are primarily who I interviewed.

To maintain proper ethics when conducting research, it was important to take the proper steps to ensure that the information was collected in an ethical and private way. I made sure to make each participant aware of my research and signed a waiver for participating prior to conducting the research. The complete informed consent pdf can be found in Appendix B. In addition, all responses were recorded without names directly attached to the responses to maintain confidentiality. By following these two important steps, this ensured that participants felt comfortable to share their honest feedback and aided in me getting the best understanding of them as fans.

Secondary Research

Utilizing secondary research along with primary research provided a cohesive collection of data. With interviews focusing specifically on the engaged fans of the Seahawks, and secondary research focusing more generally on NFL fans, I covered both

perspectives with the introduction of this research. Even though the information was more general about the casual NFL fan, it provided some good insights that could be applied towards Seahawks fans.

Another benefit of secondary research was that I observed what other teams and other sports have successfully done to interact with their fan types and potentially draw inspiration from their tactics if the connection and crossover makes sense. Not every successful tactic could work for Seahawks fans because the city and fans are going to be slightly different and nuanced, however I kept an eye out for any applications that were a good fit.

One example is “Take Campus to the Recruit”. Clemson Athletics says the driving force of their social channels is to answer the question, what is it like to be a Clemson Tiger? They create content to answer that question. They use GIFs to videos to snap shots with a pair of Spectacles. They stress that one must get to the point quickly – as there are three seconds to grab someone’s attention and tell your story and that it is important to give your audience what they want in the format they want to consume.

Another example is “Be Prepared to Go All the Way”. The Ravens Digital Media Coordinator did not have all their images on portable hard drive, so they missed opportunities to have their story told. They have since moved the team’s archive to a cloud based visual media library and streamlined the Raven’s entire visual storytelling strategy. They revamped their website and interactive content with a focus on visual storytelling. They streamlined their in-game image sharing workflow and created an easy, fast system for sourcing images. They improved the way they engage their fans by ensuring that their technology could handle their needs.

Chapter 5: Literature Review

Through Kenton's leadership, the Seahawks continue to do extensive independent research on social metrics, fan engagement, and fan breakdowns to better understand the effect of the content they push out externally. Year-to-year, the Seahawk's communications goals are always changing because the focus and objectives might be different. This means that there are new and unique challenges presented each year. To add value with my effort and bring new ideas to the table, it was vital to truly understand their different types of fans and ultimately build off of their existing research and strategies.

Seahawks' Sales Funnel

Fans are an integral part of a professional organization. These teams have bottom lines and need to operate like any other business and generate revenue. Teams make the majority of their revenue based on TV rights, however the rest of their ticket, in-stadium, merchandise, and sponsorship revenue all revolve around having a strong and integrated fan base. Having millions of fans doesn't mean much to an organization if they only passively engage with your team and don't invest in the team. Building a relationship with fans is important only if it can help push fans into a sales funnel and drive revenue for the team. With the rise of social media, the value isn't in the "likes" and "comments," but rather building a community of fans, establishing a place to push sponsorships, and getting people to feel inclined to invest in the team. Any organization must ask themselves how they can continue to engage with their fans to help move them from being just an engaged fan into a more invested fan or from a family with a future fan to an entire family buying merchandise for their watch party every Sunday.

Fan Engagement, Not One-Size-Fits-All Approach

Sports event organizers have a wealth of opportunities to attract audiences. However, engaging audiences isn't a one-size-fits-all approach. With a multitude of audience types, different methods are needed to effectively attract a specific fan type. Ultimately, understanding your audience is the key to properly attracting them and engaging with them. While identifying new ways to better connect with fans using digital media, I spoke again to Kenton Olson, Director of Digital Media, and learned it is vital to prioritize and self-identify your targeted fan types.

Each year, the Seahawks conduct a local campaign called the "12 Tour" where the team travels throughout Washington and Idaho and stops in cities that wouldn't normally be close enough for Seahawks interaction. This method of attracting an audience is quite effective because it brings the Seahawks to these local engaged fans and youth and creates a new personalized and unique experience. Many Seahawks fans outside of the Northwest have never heard of this event because it wasn't targeted for them. With the focus on locals and youth, the event pushed local TV viewership which maps back to generating TV revenue. Given the popularity of social media, it's easy to think social is the way to attract all audiences, but this example is a great reminder that there are a variety of ways outside of digital media that can be equally effective. For organizations across the US, a similar strategy to the 12 Tour could easily be implemented to interact with their local fans and youth.

Another effective Seahawk strategy is creating social media content that appeals to specific fans. When managing any social account, content is king and it's vital to keep supplying followers with engaging posts. This can be challenging because any

team's fan base is very diverse. For example, a kid may not be interested in the hardcore X's and O's and a season ticket holder may not care about a pop culture reference. Once again, there's no one-size-fits-all approach, one simply has to rotate content to serve different fan types.

For invested fans, a fun solution could be to collaborate with the local radio station and talk fantasy football matchups prior to each game. For a fan who loves the X's and O's and details of the game, creating a YouTube piece of content that historically has a longer listen time than something that lives on IG would allow these fans to properly absorb the content and be engaged without bogging down the other social feeds.

For engaged fans, following what is trending is a great way to interact and bring new fans into an organization. Trends transcend all types of people and tapping into a viral meme like baby Yoda helps teams attract people who normally wouldn't look at Seahawks content, but with the attachment of pop culture may start to engage. In order to be effective, it's important to stay on top of trends and be nimble with distributed content. Many teams have heavily adopted this strategy, so be quick with trends because the contribution could be buried amongst others if posted late.

For future fans, the content needs to help build an affinity towards the team. Therefore, creating fun videos introducing the players/basics could be valuable. While most of the fan base may already be aware, it's important to attract new fans that are seeing and learning about football for the first time. One deterrent to football that many fans express is that it's too confusing, so better education could help combat this and retain more fans. People could opt-in to this curated content via the mobile app so that it

only reaches those who desire the additional explanations and introduction to football and the team.

No matter which methods an organization implements, it is important to think about the strategy behind the implementation. One must consider which fans to attract, how best to effectively attract these fans, and how this fan type maps back to fulfilling the business objectives. Attracting fans is great, but until they are financially invested in some way, it doesn't actually boost your business. Fans take time to fully attract, so making sure the interactions are quality experiences, whether digitally or in-person, is key.

Two-Way Interactions

The Seahawks, along with many other teams on social, utilize two-way interactions to build stronger fan relationships. The idea is that most of the content a team posts should add value to the viewer, be personable, genuine, and consistent (impactbnd). Eighty percent should add value and build the brand, and 20% can be self-serving (impactbnd). If fans feel at home on your social platform as opposed to being constantly sold something, they are more likely to be candid, converse, and engage. The daily conversations already taking place on social media can be a source of valuable and honest feedback moving forward. All of this is important to keep in mind because the campaign and solution I created needed to align with how the Seahawks already carry themselves on social media and interact with their fans.

Chapter 6: Research

Empathizing and Understanding Engaged Fans' Wants, Needs, and Desires

After conducting my interviews with 20 different self-identified Seahawks fans, the opinions and perspectives were quite unique, but provided a good amount of similarity that helped guide me to creating a comprehensive solution moving forward. With every fan being slightly different, I tried to exclude my own biases during this portion of my research and just see what insights jumped out when looking at the fans' responses overall.

To synthesize and combine all the responses, there needed to be some criteria to help narrow down and isolate popular themes in the responses. I decided that it required at least five individuals (25% of the survey population) to be considered a theme and added to my list. Refer to for the key themes in responses based on each question provided.

Table 1: Key Themes of Survey Responses

<p><u>Interest:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outdoors • Sports • Hanging out with friends 	<p><u>Initially Made You a Fan:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local ties (fan of Seahawks because they're from Northwest) • Parents watch & forced to watch by association
<p><u>Reason for not Liking a Team Anymore:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moved away • Weren't good anymore 	<p><u>Watch with Other People:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family & friends (100%)
<p><u>Seahawks Engage with You:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personalized experience (50%+) • On-field access (50%+) • Behind-the-scenes of players' personal lives • More community events with kids - from adults only • Better explanation of the rules & strategy behind plays and game in general 	<p><u>Thing to Change about Digital Media:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Too many posts • More highlights • More behind-the-scenes • Didn't use social media at all - from adults only
<p><u>Features of Social:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IG stories (50%+) • Conversations • Friends 	<p><u>Interact with the Seahawks:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instagram (players and/or team) • Website (older fans)
<p><u>Incentive to Attend a Game:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VIP experience (50%+) • Shortened travel time to game • Cheaper tickets 	<p><u>Follow other Teams:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other local teams

Defining the Problem

After gathering all the key themes, I pulled out key patterns and created four overarching problems that could be addressed. When creating each one, I made sure that they were based on different key themes and that it set me up well to brainstorm ideas that would address those points. Based on the four problem statements, I created

subsequent questions that encompassed the problem and helped me ideate potential solutions in the upcoming phases.

Problem #1: The more casual engaged fan lacks personal connection to the Seahawks and views a physical experience as a barrier to becoming more invested.

Question: How can we bring the in-person / on-field experience into Digital Media?

Problem #2: Fans in the state of Oregon recognize the Seahawks as a local team, but struggle to connect with the Seahawks in that way.

Question: How might we make the Seahawks more like the local team for Oregonians?

Problem #3: Many younger fans are introduced to the Seahawks through their family or friends, but without those people lack the individual personal interest and investment in the Seahawks.

Question: How can we amp up the connection between family and the Seahawks?

Problem #4: For engaged fans that aren't interested in the football itself, they feel disconnected to the Seahawks because they don't know who the players are on a human level and don't see the Seahawks engaging with them in the community.

Question: How can we tap into the human-element of the team and the Seahawks' community efforts?

Ideating Creative Solutions

For this step, I brought in my own insights and opinions as I generated potential solutions for better engaging with fans. In this stage, no idea was a bad idea and I wanted to be as creative as possible. So, I gave myself five minutes for each problem statement and wrote out as many ideas as I could. This process was beneficial because it didn't allow time for me to nit-pick and think deeply about my ideas. I easily and freely generated new ideas that I wouldn't normally have thought of. Attached in Appendix C is my full list of brainstormed ideas.

After creating an extensive list of creative solutions, I then tried to think more critically about each problem statement and idea and assess the feasibility and my capabilities of executing something like this through my lens of leveraging digital and social media. For the rationale of why I eliminated the other three problems, refer to Appendix D.

Initial Solution

Ultimately, I selected pursuing problem #1: Bringing the in-person, on-field experience into digital media. This was the most appealing direction because it encompassed a lot of the needs depicted from the initial fan survey, specifically how people wanted a personalized experience, on-field access, and behind-the-scenes content. Among the various brainstormed ideas, I gravitated towards a personalized VR experience because it was something that I personally previously hadn't seen executed too much within the sports industry, particularly the intersection between asking what content fans wanted and then delivering the according VR experience live.

The beauty of this solution was that there were two levels of personalization. The first level was with polling, where fans as a collective would be able to choose what type of content they want to see earlier in the day: whether it's walking into the stadium, locker room, or pre-game warm-ups, etc. They would then collectively vote on which player they wanted to feature. This set up still allows the team to dictate the options and which players and areas are available for access. This could be a great way to showcase new players that aren't quite as popular and share the spotlight with a unique opportunity that naturally would draw in fans. The second level of personalization was that every viewer would be able to view wherever they wanted to get a slightly different perspective than another viewer because of the area's 360-degree viewpoint. Unlike traditional video, the 360 camera continuously films all around it and stitches the footage captured from two fisheye lenses together making for a live 360 experience where the viewer isn't confined to look in one specific location.

Additionally, this initial solution had an added benefit of re-engagement because in the morning fans would vote on what they wanted to see, and because they asked for something, they would more likely remember to look back on social to see what they requested. Furthermore, with the content being showcased live, it would tie directly into the timing of preparing for gameday and could further remind and excite viewers to tune-into the game on TV. Ultimately, the experience and perspective is unique to every viewer, allowing them to ask for personalized content, control what they see live, and be incentivized to re-engage with the content and team throughout the day.

Plan for Prototype & Testing

Once I decided on this direction for the project, I knew that I had two different types of prototyping and testing that I wanted to execute: self-study and real-life application. The first method of testing my creative solution was through individual testing on my own. Getting familiar with the camera and its capabilities, shortcomings, and how to use it the most effectively were all elements I knew I needed to learn regardless of what camera I picked. These tests were as simple as hanging out with my friends and messing around with different features, but also going to the rec center and trying out more complex camera movements and videography to push the boundaries and try new creative ideas.

The second method of testing my creative solution was a live capturing of content at a sporting event. Because the current time frame was spring term of school, football was over. However, I knew that I could do a prototype and test for other sports. I reached out to the University of Oregon Athletic Department and my former coworkers, Ryan Greco and Josh Phillips. They met with me to discuss my content plan, feasibility, sports event access, and content sharing.

I selected my prototype and test to be for an Oregon women's home basketball game. This was a great fit for my thesis and for the team because their coach Kelly Graves is all for creative and new content that showcases the program. Knowing that other coaches can be more controlling, resistant to digital media and providing fans with new perspectives, this was a natural and exciting choice. Although I have worked in the athletic department for two years doing both marketing and creative, the women's basketball coaching staff wasn't familiar with me and might have been hesitant to have

a new person filming on the court and in other exclusive areas. Therefore, Josh Phillips, Associate AD of Digital and Creative Media, volunteered to be alongside me throughout the day to help inform coaches of what was going on and to ensure I was able to capture all the different angles and content that I needed and wanted to showcase.

One of the big takeaways from our discussions was that they were willing to do a 360 live stream, but Matthew Knight Arena, home basketball arena for the Oregon Ducks, has a poor Wi-Fi and Internet connection. Given that the @GoDucks accounts do normal live streams in Autzen stadium and sometimes struggle to have an optimal connection, there was high concern that the quality of the live stream could be heavily impacted by being at an indoor event space. The worst thing to do for a live test would be to promise fans an experience and then have that interaction be a lackluster, disappointing, and frustrating experience due to poor Internet. Based on that feedback, I decided that it was okay to forgo the live stream feature for my content capture plan. Instead, I filmed a series of clips throughout the day and used those 360 video clips as mock-ups for a potential 360 live stream. This simulated what I envisioned will be possible in the future given optimal Internet connection and live stream capabilities built-out within event spaces.

Once I got the approval from UO to film, I went back to the prototyping phase and again worked with my friends to experiment and try out new camera moves and techniques that were specific to basketball and the type of access that I would be allowed on gameday. This advance preparation gave me the confidence to go into a live pre-game, game, and post-game experience and succeed with my test.

Camera Capabilities Needed For This Project

Before beginning my prototype or testing phase, I researched and found the perfect camera. Using the proper camera was key to execute my ideal solution. Here is an extensive list of the camera features I desired, the pros and cons, and how it factored into my final purchase.

360-Degree Video Capabilities

This was first and foremost the most important aspect of the camera because this created new opportunities visually and experientially for the viewer.

360-Degree Video Live Streaming Capabilities

Going live helps align the content and place it within the general timeline of a gameday. The ability to go live removes the need for editing the video and eliminates delays in posting. If the content weren't live, then the video would require editing and that takes time to download, edit, and post. This felt unnatural and mistimed to have fans request pre-game footage in the morning of a gameday and then receive it either during the game or the following day. Going live also adds a lot of immersion into the pre-game fan experience because one is literally following an athlete's journey prior to the game starting, which feels really exciting and is the perfect precursor for tuning in for the kickoff.

Portability

While a lot of 360 cameras have live streaming capabilities, not many of them are portable. When it comes to portability, there are only a few cameras remaining that can do the job: Insta360 and GoPro models. These two models are built for extreme

sports videography and have the tools and equipment included to cover professional sports. While they both offer a wide variety of attachments and features that help get different types of shots, the most important tool is the invisible selfie stick by Insta360. This is an expandable and collapsible selfie stick that is perfectly designed to align directly below their 360 cameras to where they get stitched out of the final shot. It simply screws in so there's no alignment required, and it is easy to lock in and start shooting. The GoPro has a similar selfie stick, but it's more inconsistent on whether the camera is lined up well enough to have the stick removed from the footage. The end result with the much superior Insta360 is that it looks like the camera is floating in the air and when the handle is held near someone's waist, the viewer can't even tell someone is holding the camera. This type of feature will help immerse the viewer into the live video.

An additional benefit of the camera on a selfie stick means that the camera can be in different places that would normally be much harder to reach. The stick extends up to 47 inches (120cm) which provides the flexibility to do crane shots above the players' heads to simulate a drone or walk through a crowd of people. It can also go below players inside a huddle or behind the bench that other times would be too hard to reach because a person and their bulky camera is too obtrusive. With portability, the camera unlocks a lot of creative ways to showcase the team and engage with fans in a new perspective and unique vantage point.

High Quality Video Resolution, Stabilization, and Low Light Performance

Without having the cameras available in-person to test, I resorted to watching YouTube videos and reading online reviews to get a good sense of each camera's

capabilities and what the footage would look like. It's one thing to see the product ads that were shot in perfect conditions, but it's entirely another to see what they look like in low light conditions, extra shaky camera movements, and other subpar everyday uses that aren't ideal.

What I learned was that the cameras need at least 4k resolution. Anything lower than that results in a decently pixelated video and the poor quality is borderline enough to where it's not even worth the trouble. The top models with capabilities to shoot up to 5.7k have a noticeable difference, particularly when zooming into the footage. This alone really narrowed down the list.

Stabilization is another extremely important feature for these cameras. Without it, the footage is surely unusable because it's way too shaky and blurry. The Insta360 models and GoPro models both feature software stabilization as opposed to in-camera stabilization, which is quite good. The "Max Hypersmooth" stabilization in the GoPro models is slightly superior to the Insta360 model's "Flowstate", however either will work well.

For sports, low light capabilities are going to be really important as many games are in the evening or inside. After looking at multiple reviews online, both Insta360 models, One X and One R, were equally superior to the Go Pro MAX.

File Export Compression and the App

While these 360 cameras shoot around 5.7k-6k resolution and look great when previewing the footage on the app, the exporting process significantly degrades the quality of the footage. That is why it's so important to have high quality resolution from the beginning so that when it is diminished from export compression, the end result is

still a good quality piece of content. According to reviews, the Insta360 software has slightly less file compression. It is important to note that there are two levels of compression when using the camera the typical way. When filmed, the raw footage is stored on an SD card. Upon opening the respective apps, it allows playback of any of the clips (with no compression) because it's playing back their specially formatted original video. To edit the video in any way requires one to download the clip natively to a phone, making that the first export and compression. This still isn't a major issue and is relatively quick to download and begin editing.

The apps are both user friendly with reviews stating that the Insta360 app was slightly better and easier to use. This appeared as a major benefit for me, since this would be my first time using a camera like this and trying to edit this unique type of footage. All the basic controls one would expect like trimming footage, reframing, and other helpful tools are all within the Insta360 app and after using it, I found that to be a very easy and intuitive experience. Once the clip is complete and ready to post, it needs to be exported again and this is where a decent reduction in quality occurs because the footage will now have been compressed two times. In future updates, both GoPro and Insta360 claim to be able to find a way to avoid the double compression. But for now, using the app results in double compression. When filming normal speed 30fps or live streaming, this won't be a problem because the quality is still good at those levels. When shooting at faster frame rates like 100 fps, it can only shoot at 3k and the double compression is a little more noticeable, but still useable. From the workflow and speed perspective, the app is ideal and easy, but to have the ultimate precision and avoid a level of compression, one can always edit the footage in Premiere Pro or After Effects

using a computer and inserting the SD card directly to the computer. This bypasses the first compression of downloading it to a phone because one is able to edit the raw 360 footage directly using the GoPro plug-in (also works for Insta360 footage) that can be downloaded for free on GoPro's website.

Stitching

Stitching occurs when the two 180 cameras overlap and meet on the edges. The software for each camera is able to "stitch" together the two separate video files into one complete 360 circular video file. With a simple sky or wall, the stitching isn't noticeable at all because it looks like a seamless shot. However, the more detailed the background gets or if there is an object closer to the screen, one will notice a slight line wherever the two cameras are being stitched together. Research recommends that a good rule of thumb when shooting is to always try to keep one 180 degree side of the camera pointing at your subject so that the stitching occurs on the edge of your focus. Another cool tip I learned when researching was that the stitching is more prominent the closer the subject is to the overlapping area. Therefore when filming, it is important to avoid close-ups of objects or people using the sides of the camera and make sure to shoot straight on with one of the two cameras.

Audio

Audio is important, especially for a live stream event to really immerse the audience in the environment. Unfortunately, the Insta360 models really struggle with audio in non-ideal situations. Whenever the camera is moving or there is a lot of wind, all audio will be compromised because it isn't able to cut through the wind. However, the GoPro is quite different and is able to deliver crisp audio when filming outside of a

moving car. This was very impressive to see and is a compelling reason to choose GoPro. Overall, in most situations both will deliver good audio, but the GoPro can be relied upon for any situation.

Battery Life

Battery life was comparable for both GoPro and Insta360 models, however in extremely cold situations the Insta360 batteries fail and have significantly shorter life. Overall, batteries take about 1.5 hours to charge and last for roughly 20-30 minutes of straight filming. When filming infrequently throughout the day and turning the camera on and off, the battery can last 2-3 hours.

SD Card Storage

Each bundle comes with a 32GB micro SD card. After experimenting, this works, but it's best to purchase a larger SD card to allow for shooting longer footage without switching out cards frequently. For reference, the camera estimates capturing about 40 minutes of footage for a 32GB card.

Best Camera Options Available

While technology is always evolving and there may be better tech, specs, and features available in the future, the top three cameras that were currently on the market as of February 2020 were as follows:

#1, Insta360 One R*

#2, Insta360 One X**

#3, GoPro Max**

*Insta360 One R had just been released about a week prior to my research and purchase and was by far the superior camera of the three.

**GoPro Max is newer than the Insta360 One X and was the second best overall camera. However, it didn't support 360-degree video live streaming and therefore had to be placed at number 3 on the list.

Camera Selection

For this project, I really wanted to use the Insta360 One R. It had just debuted, supported 360 live stream, had interchangeable cameras for maximum flexibility, featured better stabilization, and overall was a better version of the Insta360 One X. However, because it was released about a week prior to my purchase, they weren't widely available like the Insta360 One X and GoPro Max. (e.g. was not available on Amazon with Prime 2-Day shipping). This camera could only be purchased through their website and took over a month to ship.

Given the opportunity to film the Oregon women's basketball team, there were two home games remaining in the season. I needed to ensure that I would receive the camera in time. Not only prior to the game, but a couple days early to test out and prototype the types of shots. I wanted to be well-prepared going into the live event and with two weeks until the final games, I had to rule out the Insta360 One R because it wouldn't arrive in time. Choosing between the Insta360 One X and GoPro Max, I selected the Insta360 model for the reasons shown below:

- Better low light results
- Better user-Interface
- More reliable invisible selfie-stick

- Good battery life
- Great package of necessary accessories that could be shipped quickly

Takeaways from Testing with the Insta360 One X

1. Testing relieved a lot of stress. With shooting a live sporting event, there's only one opportunity and if it passes, then that moment is gone. Getting more familiar with the camera, how it works, how to change settings, change batteries, and plan out shots all helped me feel prepared going into gameday.

2. Get a feel for moving with the camera. Practicing with my friends in the rec center was extremely helpful. I made sure to practice with multiple people to simulate how every basketball player plays a little bit differently. The camera, when extended, is basically an extension of the body and one has to be cognizant to avoid interfering with an athlete's movement. With friends, I had them perform a lot of different shooting and dribbling moves that I could attempt to film. Since this was practice with very low stakes, I pushed myself creatively to come up with as many unique and fun ways to capture my friends. While certain shots were much more dangerous because the camera whips near the people, this was the time to experiment and push the boundaries.

3. Having a shot list is key. Without actually doing the live stream or poll of fans, I had a lot of freedom going into the game to capture whatever I wanted. My goal was to capture as many different moments as possible to simulate different unique live streaming opportunities. With a 360 camera, there were a lot of unique ways to capture a shot and having a plan for every moment ensured that my shots were varied and that I maximized every opportunity when shooting the footage.

After practicing, I had a comprehensive list of shots that I wanted, however I knew some of them wouldn't be the best idea to execute with the women's basketball team. Therefore, I cleared my different shot ideas with Josh Phillips to receive the green light approval to capture these during the actual game. Safety was the number one priority, and I didn't want to put the athletes or myself in a position where someone could get hurt.

I had a lot of fun during this testing process and was able to really push myself creatively to come up with some new and unique perspectives. To get a better sense of what I was thinking headed into gameday, here is a link to the reel of my favorite test clips: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1gc7yOz5_H6iz2vGLMderG1ATb_dPQz5P/view?usp=sharing

Chapter 7: The Prototype / The Solution

Written Explanation of Campaign

Over the past year, I worked with the Seattle Seahawks to conceptualize and deliver a new creative approach to increase fan connection using digital media. After preliminary research and understanding their team, I decided to target the engaged fan and problem solve with them in mind. Following interviews with this specific fan type, I was able to draw some insights from the primary research that could be molded into a potential solution that fit their unique desires of having a personalized on-field experience. My proposed solution is currently hypothetical, but serves as an optimal goal for implementation once technology advances and is able to execute it smoothly.

Using Instagram Stories, we would poll fans for their desired behind the scene content. This includes asking fans which player they want to spotlight this week and what type of behind the scenes feature they want to see. The team can control these questions (by limiting players or showcasing different players, removing players from the poll after being featured, or showcasing rookies or less-known players to fulfill this fan experience without distracting or adding another fulfillment obligation for your top players.)

Using the top-voted feedback, according to which player and feature was desired, the team would go live on Instagram using their newly implemented 360 live feature. This feature isn't currently out yet, but since Facebook is currently capable of doing this, I believe this feature should be in the pipeline for Instagram (who is owned by Facebook). An employee would follow the player throughout their warm-up routine or specific pre-game experience and be feeding a direct 360 feed to fans everywhere on

Instagram. By keeping both the polling and distribution to Instagram, it creates an initial personalized experience with fans voting that will hopefully incentivize them to tune-in later in the day to potentially see what they asked for. This experience, because it is live, would distribute and align perfectly with the current gameday flow. Fans could be “on the field” watching pregame warm-ups on the live stream and potentially viewing the same activity on TV (but from a different viewpoint). Similarly, when players run out of the tunnel, they can choose to join the live stream and be running out behind the team as it’s happening. The live nature of this experience and it being paralleled with real life hopefully will drive viewership to the game itself and help pull fans into a more comprehensive gameday experience that spans from the beginning of the day voting, to mid-day experiencing warm-ups, and then directly into kickoff and enjoying the game.

Furthermore, as fans watch the 360 experience, they will be able to move the camera around independently and look wherever they want. This gives another level of personalization to their experience because there’s never one fixed perspective, every fan has the freedom to observe and experience the moment however they choose. With live audio as well, this would hopefully replicate that on-field personalized experience that engaged fans desire and create a positive experience that would hopefully translate to increasing their fan connection to the team.

Something to consider when filming the event is the type of experience you want to give your fans. There are two main approaches I have identified when conducting a 360 live stream. The first approach is what I used for the majority of my filming, where the camera operator focuses on filming and capturing the experience and not providing any commentary. The advantage to this approach is that the focus is on

the experience, observing the player, and letting each fan have the experience they want within the 360 live video. The disadvantage to this is that the camera operator is always on-camera and in view. Although the focus is never on the camera operator, with 360, a fan could turn the camera and have them potentially awkwardly standing there. If you go with this approach, the camera operator needs to be cognizant that they're always on camera and to keep a professional demeanor. The second approach is to have a host of the live stream. This could be the same MC or commentator that fans are already familiar with and have them guide the fan through the 360 experience. The advantage of this approach is that it avoids the awkwardness of having the camera operator always in-scene and it allows for unique commentary and a familiar face serving as a guide for the fans' personal tour. The disadvantage is that having a guide or MC might detract from a fan's ability to be immersed in the experience and they may enjoy the freedom of looking around without being told where to look.

As I mentioned earlier, for my final prototype I was able to get access to film the Oregon Women's basketball team's game at Matthew Knight Arena*. I approached this game as if it was the real 360 live stream experience even though it wasn't currently possible to implement. Knowing this was my opportunity to showcase my concept and idea, I went into the game trying to capture as many unique perspectives and behind-the-scene aspects as possible to have a wealth of clips that could highlight all the different ways a 360 live stream could be done.

Using all the footage I gathered, I created mock-ups for the Instagram story polls and snippets of the variety of experiences that are possible to capture. An additional

benefit of having someone capture this footage is that the video can be cut into pieces and used as short form content.

*Because the event was for Oregon women's basketball, everything for the mock-up is designed with the women's basketball team in mind and aligns with their aesthetic, not the Seahawks. To best illustrate what this experience could look for the Seahawks, I wanted to create a comprehensive visual campaign that aligned with the product in the video (the basketball team and their branding).

Visual Concept of Campaign

For the visual campaign, I included a variety of short form content as well. Here is a link to a “sizzle reel” that showcases how this could all come together and be showcased on Instagram:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/11KQqOIyRJo2pRXUcI30HD7P5QIfrXtFm/view?usp=sharing>

Results and Effectiveness

Completing the campaign without the live capability and live test limits the quantitative results. This makes it more difficult to draw a comprehensive conclusion on my proposal's effectiveness. While I wasn't able to go live or interact with fans, one method of fan interaction was through the short form content I captured. When filming, I did various mock 360 live experiences and experimented with several short form content pieces that were unique, fun, interesting and could be posted individually.

One of the videos I captured was a really cool high to low shot of Sabrina Ionescu celebrating the PAC-12 Conference Championship. Filming was very easy and when Sabrina was available, it only took 30 seconds to capture this unique piece of content. This was immediately shared to the @goducks Instagram page, where it performed significantly better than other video posts. Refer to Table 2 for the views and

likes data of all posted videos since January 1, 2020. Table 3 then shows the calculated average views and likes for all videos as compared to women’s basketball. Among all videos posted, my video received a 254% increase in average views and a 225% increase in average likes. Similarly, it was their most liked video post and second-most viewed. When compared to women’s basketball posts specifically, it still generated a 218% and 223% boost, respectively.

Table 2: Video Views and Likes (since January 1, 2020)

Video	Views	Likes	Type
My Video	102,997	24,477	women's basketball
1	20,214	5,683	football
2	21,290	6,423	football
3	29,076	10,081	football
4	29,420	9,674	football
5	19,903	5,372	women's basketball
6	21,481	6,361	women's basketball
7	56,050	16,379	women's basketball
8	37,970	11,203	football
9	25,981	8,994	women's basketball
10	46,666	11,164	women's basketball
11	113,731	17,594	women's basketball
12	28,278	6,620	baseball
13	63,744	14,808	football
14	58,963	20,021	football
15	34,701	12,994	football

Table 3: Calculated Averages of Views and Likes

	All Videos	Women's Basketball (WBB) Videos	My WBB Video
Average Views	40,498	47,302	102,997
Average Likes	10,891	10,977	24,477

By completing my thesis research, I learned a lot about Design Thinking and seeing first-hand how important iterations and prototyping is throughout the entire process. If my idea was implemented by an organization, I know that there would be even more prototyping needed to distribute a polished and professional product to the public. With every prototype and attempt, I found myself identifying various problems and challenges that I had previously overlooked. By making adjustments, I was able to quickly improve the process that yielded a better final product.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

Creating a personalized 360 live experience for fans is something that really excites me and I hope fans would be enthusiastic about too. With every aspect being geared around engaged fans' needs and desires, this tailor made experience would give the masses the personalized experience they're longing for and build a connection that further strengthens their affinity with the Seattle Seahawks.

Even though this process was tremendously challenging and laborious, I was able to meet my project goals, create a solution I'm proud of and learn some valuable lessons. I was able to better understand the business strategy behind digital media by thinking strategically about how content is received and what type of content different fans desire. I also learned to explore new ways to leverage digital media to engage with fans by going through the Design Thinking process, understanding the consumer and creating an experience with their needs in mind.

Once Internet speeds increase for 360 live streaming to run smoothly for a majority of fans across the country as well as Instagram, the use of this technology will greatly enhance fan connections. I believe this will be a game changer to engage with fans in this way and provide innovative interactions that fans will crave.

Appendices

Appendix A: Primary Research Interview Questions & Script

Hello, thank you for being willing to participate in this interview about your fandom of the Seattle Seahawks. I just want to remind you that your participation is voluntary and you can quit at any time. I also want to remind you that this conversation will be recorded so I can properly transcribe your answers.

In order to get a basic understanding of who you are we are going to ask some non-identifying questions regarding your demographics:

What is the Gender you identify as?

What is your Current Zip Code?

What city and state did you grow up in?

What is your current Age?

Thank you for those responses, we will now move into the research questions:

What initially made you a fan of the Seahawks?

What makes you a fan of the Seahawks currently?

What other teams do you follow?

Is there a team you used to like?

How often do you watch a Seahawks game on TV?

How often do you watch a Seahawks game in person?

Do you watch with other people?

What would incentivize you to attend a game in person?

How would you like to see the Seahawks engage with you?

What features of social media and web do you appreciate most?

In what ways do you interact with the Seahawks through various forms of digital media?

If you could change one thing about Seahawks digital media what would it be?

What social media accounts do you follow and feel connected to and why?

What are your passions and interests?

What do you like to do in your free time?

Well that concludes our phone interview. Thank you sharing your thoughts and participating in the study. If any new developments happen you will be sure to be informed. Do you have any final questions before we end the interview?

Thank you.

Appendix B: Informed Consent Interview Form



UNIVERSITY OF OREGON

Consent for Research Participation

Title: Thesis – Seattle Seahawks Fan Engagement Through Digital Media

Researcher(s): Mark Nelson, University of Oregon
Nicole Wilson, University of Oregon

Researcher Contact Info: 971-269-7421
mcn@uoregon.edu

You are being asked to participate in a research study. The box below highlights key information about this research for you to consider when making a decision whether or not to participate. Carefully consider this information and the more detailed information provided below the box. Please ask questions about any of the information you do not understand before you decide whether to participate.

Key Information for You to Consider

- **Voluntary Consent.** You are being asked to volunteer for a research study. It is up to you whether you choose to participate or not. There will be no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled if you choose not to participate or discontinue participation.
- **Purpose.** The purpose of this research is to better understand what makes a Seahawks fan truly a fan and learn how fans engage with the Seahawks using digital media. The responses will be used to better understand Seahawks fans as a whole and develop a creative plan to build an experience on digital media that will better engage with fans.
- **Duration.** It is expected that your participation will last 15-30 minutes.
- **Procedures and Activities.** You will be asked to answer open-ended interview questions regarding your basic demographics and various aspects of your fandom for the Seahawks. The interview will be recorded for assistance with transcribing the conversation.
- **Risks.** There are no foreseeable risks by participating in this study.
- **Benefits.** Your feedback will be used to formulate an innovative and creative fan engagement strategy for the Seattle Seahawks that may be employed in the future.
- **Alternatives.** Participation is voluntary and the only alternative is to not participate.

Why is this research being done?

The purpose of the research is to learn more about Seahawks fans and how fans engage with the Seahawks using digital media. Your responses will be used to better understand Seahawks fans as a whole and develop a creative plan to build an experience on digital media that will better engage with fans. You are being asked to participate because you are an adult and a self-identified Seahawks fan. Up to 50 people will take part in this research.

What happens if I agree to participate in this research?

If you agree to be in this research study, your participation will include a 15-30 minute phone interview at your convenience. The interview will be recorded for accurate transcription of your responses.

We will tell you about any new information that may affect your willingness to continue participation in this research.



What happens to the information collected for this research?

Information collected for this research will solely be used to build archetypes of fans and get a general understanding of what fans like and how to better engage with them using digital media. With the audio recordings, it will safely stored in a password protected device.

Please initial either of the areas below based on your preference:

I consent to this interview being audio recorded for transcription purposes and excerpts being used in a presentation

I do not consent to this interview being audio recorded for transcription purposes

How will my privacy and data confidentiality be protected?

We will take measures to protect your privacy including storing your responses in a password protected device and online in a University of Oregon sponsored data collection service called Qualtrics. Despite taking steps to protect your privacy, we can never fully guarantee your privacy will be protected.

We will take measures to protect the security of all your personal information although we won't ask for information that will allow you to be identified, so your answers will be anonymous. Despite these precautions to protect the confidentiality of your information, we can never fully guarantee confidentiality of all study information.

Individuals and organizations that conduct or monitor this research may be permitted access to and inspect the research records. This may include access to your information and interview responses. These individuals include **me, my faculty advisor, and the University of Oregon IRB (Internal Review Board)**.

What are my responsibilities if I choose to participate in this research?

If you take part in this research, you will be responsible for accurately responding to questions about your fandom of the Seattle Seahawks.

What if I want to stop participating in this research?

Taking part in this research study is your decision. Your participation in this study is voluntary. You do not have to take part in this study, but if you do, you can stop at any time. You have the right to choose not to participate in any study activity or completely withdraw from continued participation at any point in this study without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your relationship with the researchers or the University of Oregon.

Will it cost me money to take part in this research?

Taking part in this research study shouldn't cost you anything. It will simply be a survey and phone-interview..

Will I be paid for participating in this research?

No



Who can answer my questions about this research?

If you have questions, concerns, or have experienced a research related injury, contact the research team at:

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An Institutional Review Board ("IRB") is overseeing this research. An IRB is a group of people who perform independent review of research studies to ensure the rights and welfare of participants are protected. UO Research Compliance Services is the office that supports the IRB. If you have questions about your rights or wish to speak with someone other than the research team, you may contact:

Appendix C: Ideation Brainstorm

Problem #1: The more casual engaged fan lacks personal connection to the Seahawks and views a physical experience as a barrier to becoming more invested.

Question: How can we bring the in-person / on-field experience onto Digital Media?

- VR experience based on fan preference
- First person follow along video
- Fly over of the stadium
- More audio of the game, ways to feel like you are in the stands
- Send in videos from home that are then integrated into videoboard cheers – bringing together digital fans with fans in stadium. e.g. Cheering about a false start, or touchdown, etc.
- Let fans vote for coin toss selection
- Let fans pick one play during the game
- Let fans pick the uniform
- Let fans pick who runs out of the field for introductions

Problem #2: Fans in the state of Oregon recognize the Seahawks as a local team, but struggle to connect with the Seahawks in that way.

Question: How might we make the Seahawks more like the local team for Oregonians?

- Create an experience in Oregon
- Create connections to the Seahawks on social by scheduling in-person watch parties or meet-ups (people liked watching with other people)
- Better associate both Oregon and Washington imagery in marketing efforts, lot of embodying Washington, but rarely info about Oregon.
- Highlight players on social that are from the state of Oregon or players from a college in Oregon (perhaps expand to all states)
- Build out local location-based sales promotions that fans outside of Washington could redeem based on stores in Oregon. (if people already get free haircut for a pick-6, why not extend into Oregon to make fans more invested)

Problem #3: Many younger fans are introduced to the Seahawks through their family or friends, but without those people lack the individual personal interest and investment in the Seahawks.

Question: How can you amp up the connection between family and the Seahawks?

- Create a campaign that shares stories revolving around fans being a family and the Seahawks (e.g. My dad and I always watched together, my dad is passed away now, but I still watch because it reminds me of him)

- Create an interactive game that reinforces and incentivizes groups of people to participate as opposed to just one, pushing people to watch with friends and family as they play along with the game
- Post more family imagery on pages, really tap into the 12s and promote more about family
- Showcase the players' families to reinforce family.

Problem #4: For engaged fans that aren't interested in the football itself, they feel disconnected to the Seahawks because they don't know who the players are on a human level and don't see the Seahawks engaging with them in the community.

Question: How can you tap into the human-element of the team and the Seahawks' community efforts?

- Share individual players upbringing and stories outside of sports
- Showcase and redistribute content showing players and their pets
- Organize information about what the Seahawks already do and what players do to volunteer in one place that people can easily find. There's a lot of work that many fans just aren't aware have happened or has been shared. Bring the content to them so they don't have to find it.
- Create a separate Seahawks community account
- Organize web chats or video calls to schools for a Q&A to inspire kids and be good role models (thought is that its more accessible to video call than send athletes to specific school)

Appendix D: Rationale for Eliminating other Problem Statements

Problem #2: Enhancing the local connection between Oregonians and the Seahawks

This was ruled out because it was too specific on Oregonians and I found it difficult to ideate ideas surrounding this solution. If the Seahawks were to implement the idea, there would need to be a large enough potential return on investment and narrowing the scope to just Oregonians seemed too narrow for a something that involves global distribution on social.

Problem #3: Building connection between family and the Seahawks

There was a lot of potential due to the large amount of interviewees that got connected to the Seahawks via their family. The Seahawks-managed, fan account, @12s, does a fantastic job highlighting the family connection at games, but does neglect to touch on the family connection at home in-front of the TV on Sundays. It makes sense why the accounts does this though because while the 12s are everywhere, their presence is most felt at Century Link Field and therefore the account primarily showcases that. Although this was a cool opportunity, I felt more strongly pursuing problem #1 and thus moved on from this option.

Problem #4: Tapping into the human-element and Seahawks' community efforts

This was an interesting theme to arise because the Seahawks already showcase a lot of human-element and community content on their social platforms, yet people weren't aware of it. The main issue appears to be the social distribution isn't finding the

older consumers who desire that content or perhaps feeds are so oversaturated that the content gets lost in the shuffle amongst everything else the Seahawks post. Since the organization already does a sufficient job fulfilling this need, I didn't feel it necessary to further pursue this direction.

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