

A Marketing Analysis and Outlook of the University of Oregon Women's Basketball Future

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This project aims to study the University of Oregon Women's Basketball team's previous attendance at games, as well as this current season's attendance to create an analysis of past successes and struggles. The objective is to look for trends based on the UO team's attendance history as well as reported trends from other women's basketball studies and marketing for women's sports in general to create a marketing proposal that would increase attendance at home games. With the increasing popularity in women's sports more studies are becoming available looking at what does and doesn't tend to work for marketing. Using marketing analysis methods I examine factors that are more likely to have previously influenced attendance at UO games, and compare that to other reports to develop a forecast of what the future of women's basketball may look like. I'll also talk about the changing landscape of collegiate sports, including NIL and the change to the Big 10 conference. Following that, I'll explain how the University of Oregon's team should work towards meeting that future.

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Background

History of Women's Basketball

The history of women's basketball and sports is also important to consider as it relates to the marketability of the sport. It officially became a sport for women to play in 1891, but had decades of severely different rules than the men's leagues until the 1970's, when they began to align more closely (Jenkins, "Women's Basketball: How the sport evolved into the popular WNBA"). The altered rules included the number of players, the dress code, shot clock (a lack of any shot clock), and expectations for physical contact. The sport itself wasn't even at the "professional level" until 1996, when the WNBA was officially announced. The implementation of the WNBA has increased all aspects of women's basketball ranging from interest from potential players, to funding at all levels of the sport, to viewership.

Women's sports have historically had lesser viewership, received less funding, and had lower attendance at games than men's sports. However, that has been shifting away from being true as women's sports have fought for proper compensation and been steadily rising in popularity. This is highlighted by the NCAA women's basketball championship in 2024 which reached the highest viewership of any basketball game since 2019 (Women's College Basketball Championship Game draws record-breaking 18.9 million viewers).

More and more studies have been conducted with women's sports as the focus, to determine what influences attendance at games in order to take advantage of this trend. Increasing attendance at women's games doesn't just matter for the sake of increasing attendance. A larger attendance (both overall and on a per game basis) ultimately leads to higher revenue. Higher revenue means more leverage for the women's basketball team and women's sports as a whole when looking at increasing funding. Essentially, having more people show up to women's games means that women's programs have the potential to receive more money to expand their sports, take care of their players, and hopefully continue increasing in popularity.

History of UO Women's Basketball

Women's basketball at the University of Oregon started in 1984, with games being played between interclass teams (UO athletics: Women's basketball). In 1913 the Women's Athletic Association was created, and with it came more organized opportunities for the teams. It wasn't until 1966 that a standardization was developed for regional contests at the intercollegiate level, and in 1971 the framework for national championships was established. Title IX in 1972 further increased the opportunities for the team and its athletes, and resulted in the beginnings of success for the program. Since 1982 the team has appeared in the NCAA tournament 18 times, frequently making it further than the first round (Oregon Ducks Women's Basketball index: College basketball at sports). The program has had sustained competitive success, with several

deep pushes into the tournament in recent years. Their most recent season saw them enter the NCAA tournament as the 10 seed, with an unfortunate second round loss.

Literature Review

Marketing overall has made incredible changes over time, and more recently, sports marketing has taken some drastic steps. Whether from changes in consumer behavior or new technology, brands and teams have had to adjust their plans and adapt in order to remain competitive. On the rise in recent years has been women's sports, and especially women's basketball. In this literature review I will try to explain some relevant concepts for marketing as a whole, sports marketing, and marketing for women's college basketball.

Marketing itself is the process by which companies or businesses communicate offerings to potential consumers. Sports marketing is similar, but with two facets. One being the same, that is, communicating their offerings (mostly entertainment and experiences) to consumers. The other would be marketing through sports, which would be a company using a sport to market for their own brand. The second (marketing through sports) won't be discussed in this lit review, but is important to know when doing sports marketing (Fetchko, "Sports Marketing").

Sports Marketing

Sports marketing differs from marketing in general in three big ways. Sports marketers and teams deal with affinity advantage, which is essentially that people tend to stick with their chosen teams. Fans generally form an emotional attachment to “their” team for a variety of reasons, and seldom deviate from that. This can be both an advantage and disadvantage. It illustrates that some fans will remain loyal regardless of team success, but also allows those fans to put pressure on front offices. Teams don’t want to let down loyal fans (read businesses don’t want to alienate loyal customers), and have to balance that with doing what they believe will be best for the team long term. This is a major advantage for large market teams who can generate massive numbers when doing well, and generally maintain good numbers when struggling. Smaller markets struggle more to generate new fans, and so have to take their fan happiness even more seriously.

The second point of differentiation the book describes is the positioning challenge (Fetchko, “Sports Marketing”). Despite being a sporting event, teams also brand themselves as entertainment. This means that they aren’t just competing with other sports teams but also all other entertainment options. Teams are forced to try and market themselves as the best sports team to watch, and the best entertainment option for that time. This positioning challenge is pretty important as well, as it can vary team by team and plays a large part in how consumers will view the entire organization.

The final differentiation the book makes is called "experience-based relationships" (Fetchko, "Sports Marketing"). This is the hardest to define and yet the simplest, as it is simply each consumer's own personal history with the team. This can be your favorite player, family history, experiences at games, gambling, anything. There's not a whole lot teams can do to influence this other than trying to offer the best experiences they can.

Women's Basketball Marketing

In a paper published by the Journal of Sport in 2015 (Martinson, "An Analysis of the Factors and Marketing Techniques Affecting Attendance at NCAA Division I Women's Basketball"), the authors did an analysis of marketing techniques that affect attendance for women's basketball, specifically within the NCAA division I. The biggest takeaways from this analysis was their numbers from the marketing techniques analysis. They found that the four most influential techniques were grassroots marketing, word of mouth, positive public relations, and hosting pre or post game events. This information was essentially entirely new at the time as almost no studies had been published revolving around attendance at women's basketball at the collegiate level. These techniques will of course also be taken into account in my own proposals and will help me to determine where the focus should be, at least on a trial basis.

Methods

Graphs and Significance Tests

To begin looking at the UO women's basketball data, I created a graph (Figure 1) of their average attendance by season, beginning with the 2015 season. This helped get an overall view of general trends and looked for any outlier seasons that may warrant consideration. I also decided to create some general graphs to look at more obvious trends and help with visualizing data. The initial tests run after the overview graph (Figure 1) are significance and correlation tests. These were run to help evaluate the impact that certain factors have likely had on attendance in the past. A significance test will give an idea of how likely it is that one thing influences another. An example in the context of this study could be looking at the significance of opponent strength and attendance. This scenario would end up producing a p-value (one number) that would indicate whether or not it is likely that opponent strength affected attendance. The p-value will allow us to decide whether the opponent's strength impacted attendance, or if change in attendance was just due to chance. For certain factors, this can be done on a game by game basis, or for seasons as a whole using the average of a variable and the average attendance.

Correlation Tests

After significance tests I ran correlation tests, based on significance tests that were deemed significant, or close to being significant. A correlation test evaluates how strong the relationship between two variables actually is. A correlation test value ranges

between -1 to 1. The closer to either 1 or -1 the value is the stronger the relationship, while if it is around 0 it has low correlation. A low correlation would indicate that it is unlikely one value influences the other, and in the context of this paper, probably not a relationship I would invest further in. This will help with creating the future marketing proposal, as the variables determined to have the "strongest" relationship with attendance will likely be deemed more important. Although neither test is perfect or tells the entire story, each is useful for helping decide where the most attention should be given. Seeing as we intend to look at ticket prices, days of the week, opponents, events during the game, the marketing budget for the team, and win-loss record, it will be important to identify areas that have the most impact.

SWOT Analysis

The final method used is a SWOT analysis of the team. A SWOT analysis is useful for breaking down a business into four categories (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) and aids in making more informed decisions. Being able to evaluate the current standing of the team allows me to create a marketing proposal that addresses each area of the SWOT analysis, while gaining a better understanding of how it currently looks. Looking for the Strengths of the team is determining what is already working well, and what advantages the team has over competitors. Weaknesses will be any area that is currently lacking and could use improvement. Opportunities are areas and external factors that can be used to fuel growth. Finally, threats are external

challenges and risks that threaten to take away from the success (in this case primarily attendance, although not just limited to that) of the team.

Results and Discussion

Graphed Attendance Since 2015

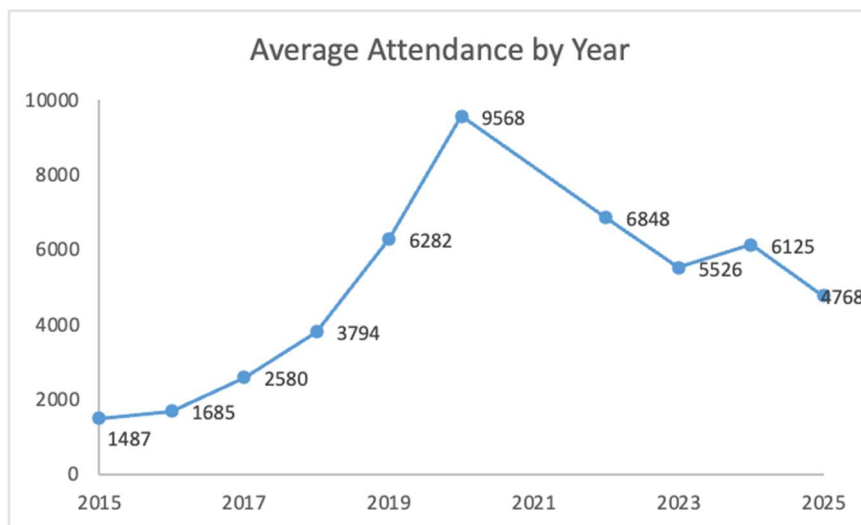


Figure 1

This graph and all other data used for these tests were posted by the University of Oregon, but select data was pulled to create my own graphs and data sets (women's basketball cumulative statistics). As mentioned before, this graph was the first thing I created with the given data, and is best used as an overall trendline, allowing for inferences and further areas of study. Immediately from the graph several key points are clear. The first is that the first half of the data indicates rapid growth in attendance at UO women's basketball games. The second is that after the 2020 season (the peak of the graph), attendance has declined for the most part. While this may seem like a

bad sign, I would argue that it shows some positive hope as well which I will discuss more later.

Significance Tests Containing Data from 2015-2025

The first significance test ran looked at the potential impact of the average attendance based on how many wins the team had in that season. Essentially, my first hypothesis was that seasons with a higher win total would result in a higher average attendance. From this, I got a significance value of 0.437, which means that it is not statistically significant. This doesn't mean that there is not a relationship between the two, but that based on the data available there isn't enough evidence to say that wins impacts attendance.

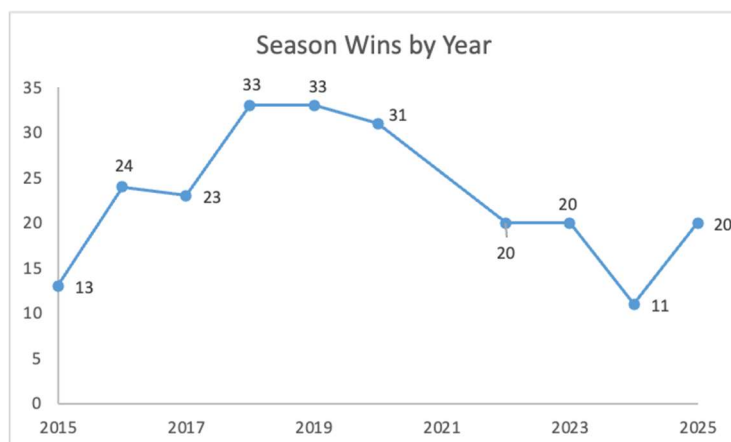


Figure 2

These figures show the two factors tested for in the first significance test. Figure 1 will not be shown for the rest as it can be referenced here.

The second significance test I ran compared the previous season's wins to the next season's average attendance. The reasoning behind this was that despite not

seeing any significant impact for the current season, I theorized that perhaps fans would attend more games if the previous season had a higher number of wins. This test gave a significance value of 0.054 as a two-tailed test, which would result in a value of 0.027 as a one-tailed test. Based on a statistically significant result being at a value of 0.05 or below, this relationship was noted as one to run a correlation test on, and of potential use in the SWOT analysis.

The third test looked at the number of ranked opponents played in a season compared to average attendance. My theory was that the more games played against ranked teams, the higher that attendance was likely to be. However, with a value of .814 this was clearly not the case. That high of a value discouraged correlation tests as well.

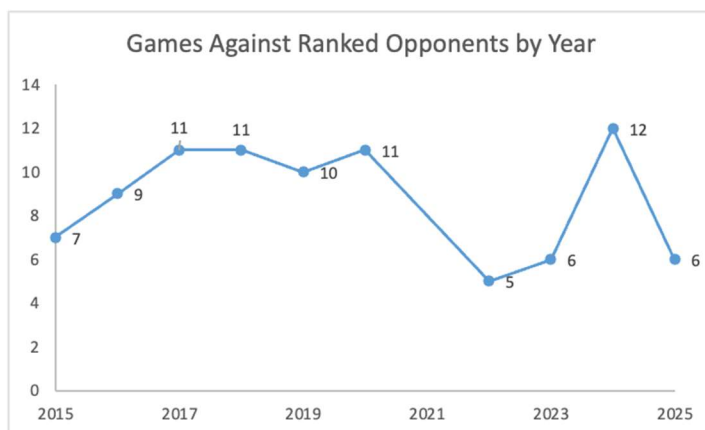


Figure 3

Single Season Significance Tests

The first single season significance test I ran was for the most recent season (2024-2025). I looked at whether conference games vs non-conference games had an impact on attendance. With a two-tailed value of .18 and a one-tailed value of .09 this was not a significant result. However, it was close enough that I chose to look at it again later for correlation tests, and note it as another potential source for the SWOT analysis.

The next factor I considered were student tickets distributed per game for the 2024 season. I was interested in seeing whether or not a higher number of student tickets being distributed impacted overall attendance. Surprisingly, this came back with a value of 0.0009. This seemed to be significant, and was noted for correlation tests.

As a result of the previous test, I chose to next examine the 2023 student tickets distributed per game. This came back with an almost polar opposite value of 0.76, indicating it was not at all significant. I next tested the 2022, which gave a value of 0.01, once again statistically significant. I considered checking more seasons, but worried that other factors would begin to play a role.

Correlation Tests

The first correlation test run was once again looking at the previous season's wins and next season's average attendance. This gave a correlation value of 0.658, a moderately strong correlation.

The second correlation test went to the potential relationship between conference games and non-conference games during the 2025 season. This resulted in a value of $-.25$, a very weak negative relationship.

The third correlation test looked at the 2024 seasons student tickets distributed per game and the attendance. With a value of 0.74 , this relationship seemed to be pretty strong.

The 2023 seasons student tickets distributed gave a correlation value of 0.08 , which based on the significance test was expected and likely was an outlier season.

The 2022 seasons student tickets distributed had a value of 0.62 . While not as strong as the 2024 season, it is still moderately strong indicating there may be a relationship.

Limitations of the Data

There were a multitude of limitations with the data, which may have impacted the results, and what tests could be run. One of the first limitations is the impact of COVID. COVID unfortunately had a significant impact on the data as well as of course the sport and world as a whole. For the data, it meant that the entire 2021 season had no attendance records to use. It also meant that the decline after 2021 in average attendance per game was difficult to attribute to any one factor. Coupled with the women's teams success right before COVID it makes it much more difficult to identify and link patterns from before and after 2021.

The 2020 season, which saw the peak in average game attendance, was Sabrina Ionescu's last season as a Duck. With COVID coming into play the next season, it becomes impossible to determine whether the fall off in attendance was due to the departure of a superstar, the aftereffects of the pandemic, a mixture of both or other factors altogether.

The 2025 season data also has some limitations, as it was so recent that not as much information was available. The student ticket distribution numbers have not yet been published, which was why I chose to use the most recent seasons available (2024-2022) before the pandemic for that statistic. Additionally, with this being the first season in a new conference, some changes should be expected. The biggest problem with that is that there isn't yet enough data to point to anything for sure.

Test Results Keypoints

There were several relationships that were identified as important due to the correlation and significance tests. The first was that previous wins were likely to be fairly important and should be included in the SWOT analysis. The second was that student ticket distribution was predicted to have a fairly large impact on overall attendance, or at least be an indication of it. The other takeaways from this came from the limitations I found in the data, or the lack of data available in some situations. The key points to takeaway before the SWOT analysis are that while some strengths and weaknesses were easier to identify, others are more difficult to pinpoint given the

evolving landscape of sports media, women's sports, college athletics, and the University itself.

SWOT Analysis

Strengths

Some of the women's team's greatest strengths come from its foundation and the University of Oregon itself. The team has been around for decades, and while it doesn't have any national championships it is still consistently a solid team. They can also lean on the strength of their 2020 team to show both that they've had "big names" play here, and that they went on to have success in the WNBA. That 2020 team led to 3 Oregon players being drafted in the top 8, including both the first and second overall pick. Those are powerful motivators to potential recruits or transfers, and should be leveraged to encourage commitments to the team.

Another massive strength to market is Nike. The University does a good job of advertising their relationship, but it remains an important factor to continue broadcasting. No other University can boast the type of connection that UO has with Nike, and it has enabled Oregon to stand out already. Nike's support has allowed UO to develop first-class facilities for athletes. While much of that attention goes towards Autzen stadium and the football facilities, Oregon still boasts beautiful facilities for all athletes.

The women's team also has their head coach, Kelly Graves, as a strength to market ("Kelly Graves - women's basketball coach"). Athletes coming out of high school or entering the transfer portal should feel encouraged by his sustained success at Oregon. In the 11 seasons he's been head coach here the team repeatedly won the Pac-12, in both the regular season and the tournament. They also have made several

deep NCAA tournament runs under his guidance, illustrating their competence at all levels of the game.

A benefit of joining the Big 10 is the size of their media deal. While Oregon won't get the same amount as other teams, they will still be averaging over 50 million dollars a year in media rights (Cleary, "How much do oregon ducks earn in big ten's \$7 Billion media rights deal?"). Before leaving the Pac 12, ESPN reportedly was offering 30 million dollars per team (Clinkscates, "Pac-12 inks media deal with the CW, CBS, ESPN for 2025 football season"). This is already a massive jump for Oregon's media income, and isn't even the most it will be. With this extra money the women's team will be able to advocate for more funding and hopefully increase their share of the pie.

While not all of these strengths immediately relate to marketing power for consumers, they offer potential paths to get there. Whether the team is marketing itself to fans, potential consumers, athletes, or brands these strengths can help with leverage and increase the team's marketability if they're used correctly.

Weaknesses

While the women's team has had sustained success in conference games, Pac-12 tournaments, and solid NCAA tournament runs, it hasn't had a championship team. Having a championship to advertise is very powerful. Brands are willing to invest heavily in teams that go on deep tournament runs, in the hopes of getting a champion. That level of advertising is huge for brands and companies interested in it, which is to the advantage of those teams that can point at their history and say "we can do it again"

(Lu, "March madness advertising"). With more brands and higher investments the women's team can invest more in themselves. This will be especially important given the conference change that UO has recently experienced.

Another weakness of the women's basketball team stems from the NCAA and their new conference. With their new conference being much further away and lacking control over conference games this may develop into more of a problem for UO. The travel has the potential to wear on athletes, dissuade fans from traveling to away games, and not feel as important to long-time fans (Crepea, "Oregon ducks react to move to big ten, longer travel to games"). These can all work to disrupt both the marketing and attendance of Oregon games. Figure 1 showed that the average attendance per game dropped off this season (the first season playing in the Big 10 conference). The correlation test that looked at conference games compared to non-conference games also showed that there was no clear relationship to attendance. While not conclusive, both those indicators would suggest that this first season in the Big 10 was not beneficial to attendance for the team.

Opportunities

Despite some unfortunate weaknesses, there are still plenty of opportunities for the team to take advantage of. While last season may not have been a great start, there is still plenty of time to adapt and make the Big 10 conference beneficial to the women's team. The Big 10 offers potential rivalries that the Pac 12 was unable to for multiple sports, but could really shine the spotlight on the women's basketball team.

The 2023 basketball season average attendance per game showed that 4 teams in the Big 10 had a higher attendance average than the Ducks did. This includes the second ranked team in the country Iowa. The Ducks placed 14th on this list, but the difference between their average and Iowas was 5,485. That means Iowa had almost twice the number of fans per game as Oregon did. This represents thousands of potential attendees for games, both home and away.

Another opportunity for the team is to take advantage of alumni that are now in the WNBA. Sabrina Ionescu should be the main focus here, but Satou Sabally and Ruthy Hebard should definitely be included as well. Having former Oregon athletes come back to reminisce with fans and motivate current athletes is huge for interacting with the fanbase. Keeping fans engaged and excited about the team is important, but reminding them what made them fans in the first place can be equally powerful. This can also be attractive for current or potential players as well, as they can see how fans appreciate their former Oregon stars and want to have that experience for themselves.

Other areas that the team should capitalize on is the rising popularity of women's basketball and increased digital marketing. With the WNBA rising in prominence due to the league's advertising and its stars, there are more opportunities than ever for college teams to follow suit. The Ducks team should follow the WNBA's example, and focus on community and ideals as they market their team each season. Marketers have found that while the NBA thrives off superstars and team fans, the WNBA excels at creating a community and having an extremely passionate fanbase (Cannon, "Marketers views on WNBA vs. NBA Marketing: Purpose-driven vs. Star-powered marketing").

A final potential opportunity to be considered is NIL and the empowerment of individual players. While the WNBA as a whole succeeds off community and ideals, that doesn't mean that star players don't also generate attention and an audience. NIL's represent a powerful chance for individuals, teams, and Universities. Players with high paying NIL deals may feel more inclined to stay where they're at, increasing their duration in college and on collegiate teams. Schools that can show they help facilitate deals for their athletes, or provide resources to help them so themselves will likely be in a better position to attract talent. NIL deals aren't all about money though, as they also offer an opportunity to take on causes. Oregon currently has a player named Deja Kelly, who has had multiple deals, and currently has one with Tommy Hilfiger. While not exactly a powerful cause, Tommy Hilfiger is still an extremely well known brand, and knowing that Oregon athletes can receive NIL deals similar to this will generate positive attention.

Threats

There are a wide variety of threats to getting people into a UO women's basketball game. Seeing as the game can be considered a form of entertainment, that means that potential threats would include movie theaters around Eugene, Netflix (assuming people stay home to watch TV rather than going to a game), or any sort of other nearby entertainment. The men's basketball team could be considered a threat, both as a different event to go to, and from a fandom perspective. The same applies to Oregon State's basketball teams (men and womens), as well as the Portland Trail

Blazers. Additionally, the WNBA has announced that beginning in 2026, Portland will be home to their own WNBA team ("WNBA"). Those are just the threats that pertain to basketball fans as well, other sports teams and clubs are also threats to potential fans.

A different threat could end up being the NIL. Even though it is also an opportunity, it carries the possibility of hurting the team more than helping it. If other teams do a better job of coordinating with athletes or have more brands willing to work with them then athletes may be tempted to commit or transfer to those colleges rather than coming to Oregon. Stars who command the most lucrative NIL deals will be motivated to move to wherever pays them the best, lets them retain the most money, and shows them the clearest path to even more. Oregon lacks the championship pedigree that some Universities can offer, and needs to make up for that elsewhere.

The move to the Big 10 could be a threat as well. I showed that average attendance went down this year despite the conference switch, and if that trend continues it could seriously negatively impact the team. There is also the possibility that playing against opponents with more eyes on them will encourage more schools to try their hand at poaching Oregon athletes, or NIL deals being offered to athletes willing to transfer. The Big 10 also eliminates some of the conference rivalries that have been around for decades, which could upset or even alienate some longtime fans. This is ultimately up to the individual fan, but Oregon can work to decrease this threat. with proper marketing of the new conference,

The Future of Collegiate Sports

The implementation of NIL deals is going to have widespread impacts on collegiate athletics. One of the more obvious changes will be increased financial empowerment for athletes. NIL deals offer athletes a new revenue stream, while encouraging them to stand out more as individuals. Companies will want to affiliate with athletes that have a larger following and strong personal brand, which will lead to more athletes working to stand out in different ways off the court. While potentially good for individuals, this could have negative effects on team chemistry. Teams that have multiple players vying for the attention of the same deal or trying to establish a name for themselves could have difficulties both on and off the court.

In line with creating bad chemistry between teammates, there may be concern that athletes might end up focusing more on the development of their personal brand than the sport itself. Some individuals may be able to use their athletic career to jumpstart a personal brand and find that they are more successful or just enjoy developing that brand more than the sport. Athletes may end up with new priorities and decide that they are better off leaving the sport that they were brought in to play.

Creating a structured supportive infrastructure to assist athletes will be paramount to maneuvering in this new field. With the lack of standardization and novelty of NIL, being able to provide a reliable support service will be extremely valuable to both Universities and athletes. Included in the services offered should be helping athletes get in touch with potential sponsors, agents, and other athletes who

have already dealt with the process. Universities will also need to be wary of any potential legal difficulties that may come from athletes signing contracts.

NIL also represents a potential boon for female athletics. Studies found that some WNBA campaigns outperform NBA counterparts in both cost-effectiveness and community engagement (Cannon, "Marketers views on WNBA vs. NBA Marketing: Purpose-driven vs. Star-powered marketing"). With higher social engagements than male athletes, female collegiate athletes can work to exert their influence in a positive way for women's sports. If collegiate female athletes are able to find partnerships that promote positive ideals and want to support women's sports it could be mutually beneficial. Increasing the audience for women's collegiate sports not only helps those athletes with their current brand right away, but boosts the sports value as a whole, and makes it easier for future female athletes.

The Future of UO Women's Basketball

Women's basketball has been shown to rely on community engagement, ideals, tradition, and pride (Martinson, "An Analysis of the Factors and Marketing Techniques Affecting Attendance at NCAA Division I Women's Basketball"). The team should focus on having social media campaigns during the offseason (leading up to the start of the regular season) highlighting community events players are involved in, showing pictures of the players volunteering, and doing "get to know you" segments. Allowing fans to create connections with players and the team as a whole will motivate more potential fans to attend games. This is likely to have long term impacts, creating a community

surrounding the team and passionate fans that are willing (and happy) to come support the team when they play.

Students

A study from 2004 looking at what motivates college students to attend collegiate sports events (Ferreira, "An exploratory examination of attributes influencing students' decisions to attend college sport events") found differences in what motivates students to attend games. They found that in general, students preferred to go to games that they perceived as more physical and popular with other students. For women's sports in particular, a driving factor they found was style of play, including skill, fast-paced action, and athleticism. The correlation found earlier between student ticket distribution and overall attendance also plays a role here. Assuming that an increased student interest in the game does have significant impacts on general attendance to the game, students should be a priority target. Based on these findings digital advertising should consist of videos of physical plays (diving for the ball, scoring on physical drives, hard fouls), as well as highly skilled moments from games (dribbling, impressive shots, blocks on defense). These should be cut together and sped up slightly, to give the impression of games being fast-paced. These videos will work to increase awareness of upcoming games and hopefully motivate students to attend.

Rivalries

According to a study published in 2015, fan interest was greatest in rivalries between teams of the scheduling factors (Martinson, "An Analysis of the Factors and Marketing Techniques Affecting Attendance at NCAA Division I Women's Basketball Games"). Other factors included game time, ranking of opponent, and point in the season. This could pose an issue for UO, as the recent conference change has made some classic rivalries unavailable. Games against former Pac-12 colleagues (USC, UCLA, and Washington) that are now Big 10 games should be advertised as "old school rivalries" and made to appeal to older fans, as well as those who just miss the former rivalries. The marketing for the women's team should also place an emphasis on games with Iowa, Maryland, Ohio State, and Nebraska in this upcoming season. Those were the four teams mentioned earlier that all had a higher average attendance in 2023 than Oregon, and should be targets for new rivalries. Next season Oregon hosts Ohio State and Nebraska which will be perfect opportunities. While it takes time for a true rivalry to form and it isn't realistic to create four new rivalries in a season, social media can help bridge that gap. Research has shown that rivalries can benefit businesses (Kohan, "Why trash talk can actually be good business"). Rivalries and trash talk can help raise the stakes, both for teams and for fans. Using social media to trash talk can make it so that it's done in a public but unserious way. This shouldn't be individual players talking, but the Oregon Women's Basketball accounts, or the mascot accounts interacting. Creating a public light-hearted bet between mascots to wear something representative of the other team depending on who wins would be an example. Something that gives fans

the feel of a little more at stake than a regular game, and can help increase the anticipation of future games.

NIL

NIL for women's basketball will be something that needs continuous monitoring from the school. With the laws surrounding NIL unclear and potentially harmful for inexperienced athletes the University will have to balance protecting athletes and allowing them their freedom to pursue deals. UO has a site dedicated to NIL ("The official Oregon Ducks Marketplace for nil deals"), which is a great start. The women's team can work to continue developing their community and ideals through helping one another navigate NIL. By having the older athletes with experience offer guidance and support, they can work to help make sure nobody is being taken advantage of, and form closer bonds as a team.

Superstars

With how new women's basketball is and the lack of media attention it was historically more difficult to develop superstar talents. With the increased attention, improvements at all levels of the sport, and individual success, that has changed. This isn't to say that those community strategies are not important or won't work, but rather that catering towards star talent should be the next step to that process. Caitlin Clark is a household name at only 23 years old. Her success and fame throughout college and into the WNBA is widely acknowledged and praised. With her arrival the WNBA is able

to begin shifting away from some of the aforementioned strategies of community and culture, and focus more on their star talent. The University of Oregon has had their own star talents come through, including Sabrina Ionescu who lit up the college courts during her tenure at Oregon and is currently thriving in the WNBA. Identifying and recruiting similar talents that can become stars will be increasingly important for Oregon, and with the Big 10 stage will allow for even greater media attention. Heavy emphasis should be put on recruiting the greatest high school athletes, and convincing them that Oregon is where they want to bring their talents. Once recruited, Oregon will need to do their part to support that talent with exceptional teammates, culture, and opportunities. It will also be important to highlight those players and have our own media push surrounding them. While their play on the court and teammates will be vital, the off court media and how they are represented will be massively influential. Creating a cycle of bringing in superstars and allowing them to shine will just encourage more young talents to want to come to Oregon, and turn them into a school that is immediately associated with women's basketball. Having that sort of reputation and star talent will bring more fans to games, and ultimately become its own marketing.

Conclusion

The collegiate sports landscape is difficult to navigate given its ever-changing nature. This holds especially true for the University of Oregon right now, as it adapts to both NIL and conference changes. Fortunately, the University has already shown its willingness to evolve and overcome obstacles. In these changes I believe that women's sports and especially basketball will thrive on new opportunities. In order to bolster their chances I believe that they should focus on marketing the strength of the UO foundations in women's basketball, the team's history of success and producing star WNBA talent, attracting student attention, developing a rich community and ideals surrounding the team, continuing to be at the forefront of changes including NIL, and developing competitive rivalries with new opponents that will increase fan attention. By marketing all these areas I'm confident that average attendance will increase at games, which will lead to profit and more funding.

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