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Upping your game
How data can help drive sports
sponsorship and fan engagement

What opportunities will surface when sports teams know exactly who is sitting in their seats every night?

One of the biggest modern challenges for sports teams is knowing who is actually sitting in their seats each night. However, advances in technology—such as digital ticketing and biometric entry systems—are addressing that challenge and soon teams will have a greater understanding of the fans who are showing up. Recognizing the value of that insight, the Miami Heat recently became the first NBA team to launch mobile-only entry, which is expected to give the organization a better grasp of the fans entering the arena—not just those who purchased the tickets.[1] But once the Heat and other teams have this information, what new doors will it unlock? How will it help organizations enhance existing revenue streams? By starting to envision and plan for the future today, teams can better prepare to capitalize on new data applications when technology closes the gap.

Deloitte's vision for the future is that of a data-rich, digitally oriented stadium and fan experience geared to deepen engagement and enhance revenue. Here, we will share a sampling of ideas under two themes that link back to ticket and sponsorship revenue in the nearer term: ***driving live game engagement and attendance*** and ***enhancing sponsor opportunities.***

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[1] Darren Rovell, "Heat become first NBA team with mobile-only entry," ESPN.com, http://www.espn.com/nba/story/_/id/20306283/miami-heat-become-first-nba-team-mobile-only-entry, posted August 10, 2017.
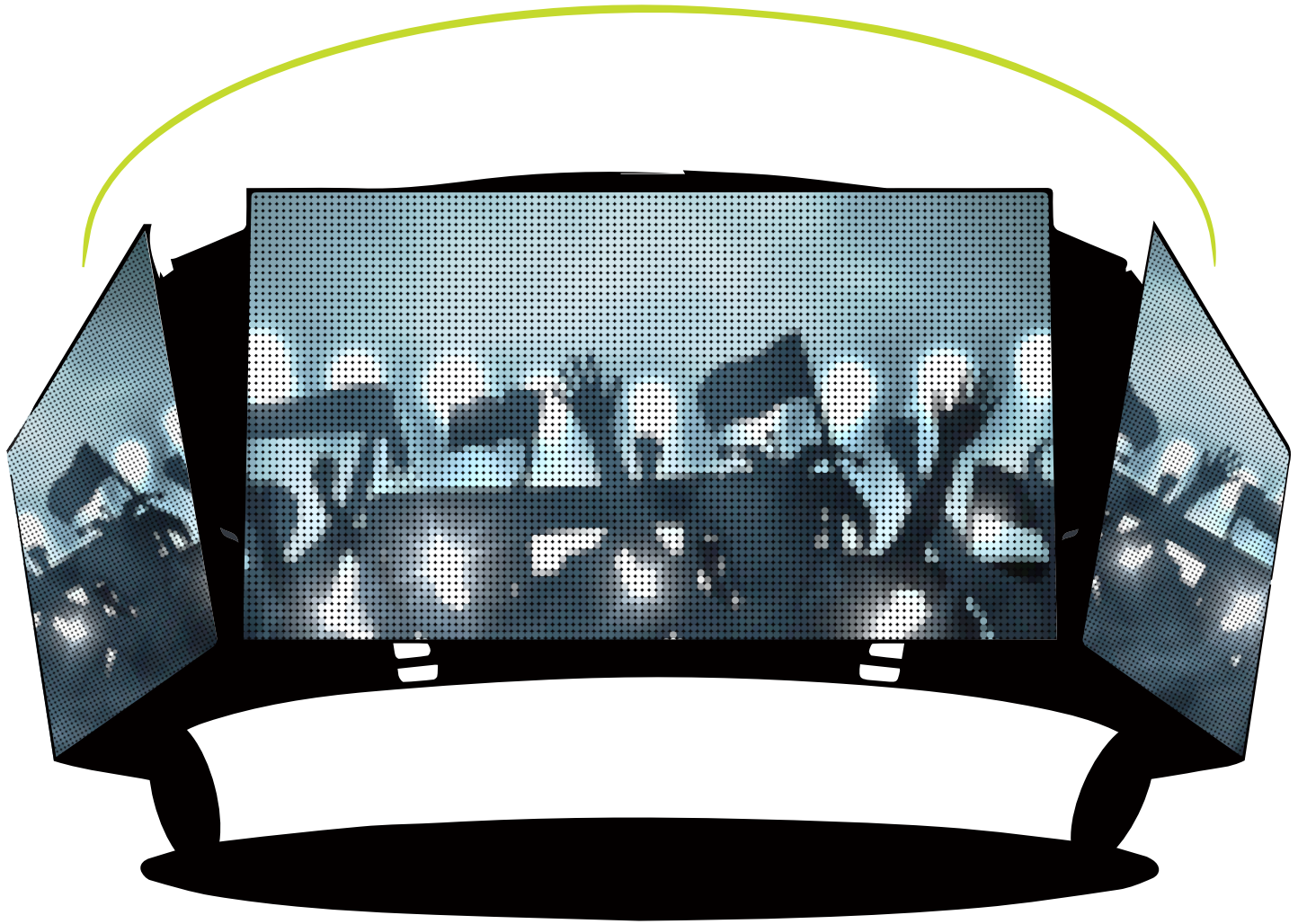
Driving live game engagement and attendance

Within the stadium, richer data could help further animate the live game experience and bolster fan engagement.

What if fans could submit song requests for the in-game playlist, then be featured on the jumbotron when their request is played? Or if teams were able to efficiently track fans with the longest consecutive game streak or the highest concession spend per game and grant winners special access to the locker room or warm-ups? Sports organizations could tie in concession promotions by

having Section 102 face off against Section 104 in a hotdog-eating contest based on the number of hotdogs purchased by section members, with the winners receiving jumbotron airtime. In-game features that engage specific fans or fan groups could create a more engaging experience for the fans involved and deliver greater entertainment value to those around them.

Looking beyond in-game features, greater knowledge of attendees' profiles could enable better targeting of fans who attend live games throughout the season—and those who do not.

By mining past attendance data, teams could drive repeat ticket purchasers with targeted promotions. For example, if teams can see that a fan attended twelve regular season games last year (whether they bought the tickets themselves or not), target that fan during the playoffs with a credit toward a twelve- or fifteen-game package

"Tapping into transaction and mobile app usage data can help teams target fans and offer tailored offerings or promotions."

for next season if the purchase is locked in by a certain date. More simply, teams could target single game purchasers from past seasons with personalized discounts for games similar to those they have attended in the past: "Relive the matchup—and the fireworks! Buy now for 25 percent off burgers for the family."

Teams could use integrated data sources and analytics to target those who aren't yet in on the action.

If a team knows all about Fan A—their attendance and purchasing patterns but also their demographics and a profile of what they enjoy outside of the stadium— they will be armed with the information needed to analyze those not in attendance. This will help to identify segments that include fans like Fan A that may convert to live game attendees under the proper circumstances or with the right offerings. Teams in similar geographies may be able to amplify the impact of their own data by leveraging that of other local teams to unlock cross-promotions. Taking a different approach, teams may tap into transaction and mobile app usage data to identify fans in the local market who frequent sports apps or local sports bars but haven't splurged on a ticket in the past 12 months, then deliver tailored promotions to help motivate a purchase.

Knowledge of fans and the networks to which they belong could help increase access to potential patrons.

If a team knows that loyal Fan B is a member of an adult softball league and 80 percent of the team has not attended a game, they could reach out with a complimentary ticket offer if the fan is able to enlist ten of his teammates for a night at the ballpark. If a

Additional thought-starters for enhancing in-game features

Pair a message from a local nonprofit chapter with a statistic on the number of folks in the stands who donated their time or money to the cause in the last year, based on a merger of fan and nonprofit data.

Encourage live attendance with "season BINGO." Unlock customized promotions for those who are physically in the stadium when the team hits milestones on their "BINGO" board—the first hat trick, the third defensive touchdown, or a victory against a key rival.

More easily identify and reward "super fans" who hit key milestones (e.g., their one-hundredth live game) with super-customized giveaways (e.g., a personalized jersey waiting at their seat).

disproportionate number of fans who are alumni of the same school are attending a certain game, blast the rest of that network with an impromptu "alumni pride night" offer where ticket purchase includes access to an in-stadium meet-up for relevant fans. A similar blast to a rival school network to launch a friendly competition once the game begins could make things even more interesting. Reward a frequent attendee with a last-minute free ticket adjacent to their paid seats with an offer to "bring a friend," which puts unused capacity to work in deepening a relationship with a core fan and engaging a new individual in hopes that they might be converted. With these sample approaches, teams are using data to leverage networks they already have access to in order to gain more authentic "ins" with potential future patrons.

Enhancing sponsor opportunities

Access to richer data will enable more focused sponsor targeting and authentic engagement that will spill outside of the stadium.

Teams can know who was at the game, their in-stadium purchase history, and where they moved within the stadium. They will be able to integrate sponsor engagement into "thanks for coming to the game" emails based on fan profiles: Consider cross-promoting with ride-share apps or hotel loyalty programs, issuing credits or rewards to users in the stands when the home team wins. Or deliver a photo of the fan in the stands courtesy of a sponsor whose tent the fan visited. The Minnesota Timberwolves have taken a step in this direction, joining forces with Fitbit in a partnership aimed to engage players, employees, and fans at and away from the court.[2] Imagine taking that engagement a step further with targeted challenges: "Receive a sponsor-driven discount off your next single-game ticket if you can keep up with Jimmy Butler's workouts or match the Timberwolves for average weekly steps!"

In-stadium sponsor experiences provide additional opportunities for customization.

Teams could use advance ticket purchase data to highlight attractive fan-segments who will be in each game's crowd, using that knowledge to tailor sponsor presence to those that may be willing to pay higher rates to access a specific audience. Teams could also more creatively contract with sponsors. Sponsor agreements could be based on actual number of visits by fans in the arena to a physical sponsor area or to the sponsor website, with pricing tiers corresponding to different traffic volumes. Sponsors are

likely to be more motivated to engage with teams if pricing is flexible based on the engagement they receive, and the franchise could activate fan incentives to drive traffic and access higher pricing tiers.

When it comes to stadium advertising, the parts can become greater than the whole.

Rather than one feature covering four sides of the jumbotron or four walls of the arena, ad space could be subdivided based on sponsors' target markets and priced to drive greater total revenue. If a team knows that those on the west side of the arena over-index on ownership of a certain gaming platform, that forty percent of those on the east side are pet parents, and that the folks behind one basket are part of a corporate event and excellent candidates for a targeted personal banking promotion, they can charge relevant marketers higher rates to target those higher-potential sections of the crowd.

Additional ideas for post-game outreach

"You seem to love IPAs—your next beer is on the local Italian bistro if you join their mailing list!"

"Last night was your first ever live game—show off around the watercooler with these stats sponsored by a regional bank branch."

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[2] Associated Press, "Minnesota Timberwolves sign deal with Fitbit for jersey patch," NBA.com, http://www.nba.com/article/2017/06/20/minnesota-timberwolves-fitbit-jersey-patch, posted June 20, 2017.

The sky is the limit. What other opportunities could data unlock?

Further enrich season ticketholder engagement. Teams could analyze data on season ticketholders to better tailor end-of-season gifts, off-season events, or community outreach based on what would best appeal to the season ticketholder base. This would provide enriched membership for fans by delivering more relevant programming and also drive engagement outside of games, helping teams deepen affinity and unlock more valuable opportunities for sponsors to engage a high-spend audience.

Launch Loyalty 2.0. With more streamlined and comprehensive access to data on fan behaviors, purchases, and preferences, teams could beef up existing loyalty program efforts. Disbursement of loyalty points and rewards could be automated—perhaps even using blockchain technology—and better personalized to contribute to deeper year-round engagement.

What's next?

The world we're describing is not too far off, with almost weekly advances in data access and analytics capabilities. The question is: What can teams do now to claim a place at the front of the pack when the time comes to implement? Consider the following actions to help get ahead of the game:

- **Flexing the data muscle.** Begin to link and leverage the data sources in the team's arsenal today to enhance the organization's comfort level and aptitude.

- **Exploring new data sources.** Discover what is available based on proprietary interactions with fans and also through relationships with third parties and external data sources.

- **Investing in the right talent.** Acquire talent with the appropriate skill sets to not only analyze data, but also draw out insights and narratives to influence executive decision making.

- **Establishing a technology roadmap.** Build a foundation to enable delivery of a more customized, data-driven experience in the future. Explore new technologies that may amplify impact of loyalty programs and fan/team interactions.

- **Piloting the future state experience.** Find logical linkages between the in-game and out-of-game experience and begin to build the vision for the next generation fan journey.

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