

Effects of Creative Advertisement on XFL Fan Engagement

Focused on Arlington Renegades' TikTok Presence

In-depth Interview of Brandon Atwood

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Discussion Outline

General Identifying Questions

- Would you classify yourself as a football fan?
- Do you feel that all football fans share a similar set of characteristics?
 - Please state three adjectives you would use to describe a football fan.
- Are you familiar with the XFL?
 - Have you seen recent commercial and social media advertisements for the XFL's 2023 season?
- Do you have a TikTok account? If so, how long have you had it?
- How often do you go on the TikTok app? For approximately how long each time?

TikTok Interaction Questions

- What content do you view most on TikTok?
 - Do you typically interact with TikToks?
 - Through likes, saves, comments or shares.
- What content is advertised the most to you, via sponsored posts or on your For You page?
 - Do you typically interact with these advertisements?
 - Through likes, saves, comments, shares or visiting linked sources.
- What criteria does a post have to meet for you to interact with it?
 - Which mode of interaction do you most commonly use?
 - Likes, comments, saves or shares

Sports Advertising Questions

- Do you believe that advertising sports, such as football, increases the prominence or size of a fanbase?
- Do you believe that social media is successful in marketing sports the way that traditional commercial advertising has been?
- When considering company advertisements on social media, specifically on TikTok, what comes to your mind?
 - What do you believe makes a successful advertisement?
 - Graphics, Humor, Information, etc.

Specific XFL TikTok Questions

- How would you say that sports teams should post on social media apps like TikTok in order to increase fanbase/interaction?
- If you saw advertising like this, would you be more likely to follow the account or team, or even buy a ticket to see a game?
 - Do you think that others would as well?
- What would you personally like to see from the XFL, or similar sports teams, in terms of social media advertising?
- What would you personally like to see from the XFL, or similar sports teams, in terms of fan interaction?

Background on Brandon Atwood

Early Life

- Atwood was born and raised in Gentry, Arkansas.
 - Population approximately 4,000.
- He began playing local peewee football at age 6.
- He continued playing football for Gentry Junior and High School.
 - He started as quarterback all four years of high school.
 - He also served as captain in his senior year.
- After graduating high school in 2020, Atwood accepted admission to the United States Naval Academy.
 - He is currently in his junior (Youngster) year.

Current Football Involvement

- Atwood plays as starting quarterback on the Naval Academy's Sprint Football team.
 - Sprint Football is a full-contact, intercollegiate, varsity sport and has the same rules as regular college football, except that all players must weigh 178.0 pounds or less¹.
- The Navy Sprint Football team has not lost a game since he joined.
 - They defeated Army West Point in the 2021 and 2022 CSFL Championship.

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¹ Collegiate Sprint Football League (CSFL); Ed Weaver, Circle W Sports, and Collegiate Sprint Football League (CSFL). "About Us." NTL Sports. Accessed March 9, 2023. <https://sprintfootball.com/about/>.

Interview Script

Interviewer

So, the general discussion outline has four different four different criteria, and we will go in order. The first will consist of general identifying questions. The next one will be about your TikTok interactions, then sports advertising questions. Then specifically with the XFL. So first, would you classify yourself as a football fan?

Atwood

I would, yes.

Interviewer

Do you feel that football fans share a similar set of characteristics with each other? Some that create almost a community.

Atwood

Yeah, I would say so. It is definitely different than other sports.

Interviewer

How would you describe the different between football and other sports?

Atwood

I think football is more strategic. There are a lot more moving parts. There are 22 guys on the field at all times and each one of them has a specific job. If they don't do that job, a lot of things can go wrong. So, it's a very disciplined sport.

Interviewer

Absolutely. Specifically, within the fanbase though, do you feel that football fans share a similar set of characteristics? If you do, will you state some adjectives you'd use to describe a football fan.

Atwood

Adjective?

Interviewer

Yes, if you agree.

Atwood

Rowdy, passionate, and I don't know. Loyal.

Interviewer

Those are good ones. Are you familiar with the XFL, whether that be their past seasons or their 2023 season?

Atwood

I'm familiar with the rules, and a few of the teams. I'm familiar with the owner.

Interviewer

The Rock?

Atwood

Yeah, I know they had started up early, I think in the 90s, but now it's being launched again. But that's about to the extent that I am aware of.

Interviewer

Okay. Have you seen recent commercial and social media advertisements for the XFL's 2023 season?

Atwood

Just Dwayne Johnson's Instagram.

Interviewer

Okay, so you haven't seen any streaming services that have had advertisements or just on Instagram?

Atwood

Yeah, I've seen ESPN advertisements.

Interviewer

Do you have a TikTok account? If so, how long have you had it?

Atwood

I do not have a TikTok account.

Interviewer

Have you ever had a TikTok account?

Atwood

I did have a TikTok account. I would say I had it for a year and a half.

Interviewer

How often did you go on TikTok when you had it? And approximately how long each time?

Atwood

Too long. I don't know, I would probably say I would spend like an hour or so per day on TikTok.

Interviewer

What content did you view the most when you had TikTok?

Atwood

Sports, definitely.

Interviewer

Did you typically interact with sports TikToks?

Atwood

Yeah. I probably liked them the most.

Interviewer

What content is advertised the most to you, via sponsored posts or on your For You page?

Atwood

Probably just whatever was on my For You page, just because I don't really look at the ads that pop up. But no, I don't remember. I know certain sporting events would get advertised, UFC events or when the World Cup was going on. Especially with the National Championship. But other than that, I don't really remember.

Interviewer

Did you typically interact with these advertisements?

Atwood

No.

Interviewer

What criteria does a post have to meet for you to interact with it?

Atwood

It's got to be fire. I don't know, I guess it would have to be something that pops out at me. Something that is like a big event that would make me want to push my plans aside just to watch a game. Maybe just highlights or something.

Interviewer

Yeah, so would you say that rather than a humorous post, you would rather see highlight reels?

Atwood

Yeah, just because sometimes commercial humor is a stretch sometimes.

Interviewer

I agree. Do you believe that advertising sports, such as football, increases the prominence or size of a fanbase?

Atwood

Yeah, I mean especially with kids getting phones younger and younger. So, like if a kid is growing up without parents that are passionate about certain fanbases, I'm sure whatever pops up on their TikTok would be the team that they want to win. So, I would say that it definitely increases prominence.

Interviewer

Do you believe that social media is successful in marketing sports the way that traditional commercial advertising has been? So, when you watched TV when you were younger and you saw sports things and thought, "wow that is so cool," do you think that social media has been that for adolescents or young adults?

Atwood

Personally, no. Just because as soon as you see an ad on social media you tend to just swipe straight through it. So, usually before an ad even gets the chance to appeal to me, I usually just swipe right through it. You know watching something on TV you have no other option, you are just going to watch it because you can't skip it.

Interviewer

Would you say if it wasn't an ad, and it just was a post on a company page you would feel differently?

Atwood

Yeah probably. Because if it doesn't have the [ad marker] then I'm not going to immediately swipe through it.

Interviewer

Okay, that makes sense. Would you also say that advertisements that don't directly advertise are better? Ones that show what it is and what it's about using graphics and humor rather than information.

Atwood

Yeah. Yeah, definitely the latter.

Interviewer

When considering company advertisements on social media, specifically on TikTok, what comes to your mind? What do you first think of?

Atwood

Yeah, I usually think it's pretty annoying. Especially since I'm usually pretty up to date with everything, when I see an advertisement for the National Championship or something. Like I already know that's happening. I usually find it annoying.

Interviewer

What do you believe makes a successful advertisement?

Atwood

Isn't that your major? Nah, I'm just kidding.

Interviewer

I mean I could tell you statistically what makes a successful advertisement. But, what in your mind would you view as a successful advertisement?

Atwood

Well, I can't give you a definite answer, but I can give tell you that whatever Burger King is doing, take notes. It is stuck in my head 24/7. Maybe like a little jingle that's like: Football, Football, Football, Football [in the Burger King Whopper song rhythm]
Yeah, that would probably catch on.

Interviewer

Would you say that sports teams should post on social media apps like TikTok in order to increase fanbase/interaction?

Atwood

It definitely wouldn't hurt. It's a good platform and there are a ton of people on it. If they are football fans, then the XFL is most likely going to pop up on their page, so yeah. It definitely wouldn't hurt.

Interviewer

If you saw advertising like this, would you be more likely to follow the account or team, or even buy a ticket to see a game?

Atwood

Maybe, yeah. Burger King's jingle hasn't made me want to buy a Whopper, but it has been stuck in my head. So maybe if I was bored on a Sunday and the XFL was jingling in my head, I might go purchase a ticket. I sure you could get a few people.

Interviewer

What would you personally like to see from the XFL, or similar sports teams, in terms of social media advertising?

Atwood

I guess just like more highlights. I feel like I never actually see highlights on the team's social medias unless I got to YouTube and look them up. Which I think is kind of crazy. Definitely less random posts about scheduling and stuff, but yeah, more hype videos. That's what the people want.

Interviewer

Okay, yeah. So, would you say less graphics, merchandise, less schedules and more highlights?

Atwood

Yes.

Interviewer

Have you seen the D.C. Defenders' beer snake?

Atwood

I have not. That sounds pretty cool.

Interviewer

What would you personally like to see from the XFL, or similar sports teams, in terms of fan interaction? When considering a team that you look up to, how would you most like to be acknowledged as a fan in their eyes? Would you like to do giveaways or different fan events, such as meet and greets?

Atwood

I never sign up for giveaways, so I don't think that is that effective. Most the time people aren't even fans, they just want free stuff. One thing that I think is very effective is like Stetson Bennett, for example, when he would go to like Chickfla, or Raising Cains, or somewhere and run the window for a couple of hours. I think it is hilarious and pretty cool when players go out to surprise people, and just do random stuff. I think that's really funny and a good way to interact too.

Interviewer

Would you think that in terms of as a surprise thing or more of a community service?

Atwood

Either or. I don't know if it would be more effective if it was a surprise, but I think it would be more genuine if it was a surprise. But yeah, if I heard Tom Brady was working the McDonald's window in Annapolis, I would probably sit in line for a couple hours. But I think either one works.

Interview Findings

Within my interview of Brandon Atwood, we discussed many aspects of effective and interesting advertisements. I asked in depth about his knowledge and considerations of football fans, TikTok and the XFL. Throughout talking to him, I began to understand the outside perspective of someone being exposed to unwanted advertisements. In my own life, I see advertisements as something interesting to look at and learn from; however, that is because my major is in advertising.

Atwood pointed out that most people skip advertisements that pop up as soon as possible. This is especially prominent on TikTok, because advertisements have a small square at the bottom that labels them as such. When looking to grow TikTok pages, Atwood stated that if something pops out to him that he finds entertaining, he will like it. He also says that if that thing is a company or product, he would consider following or buying from them.

Atwood also discussed a lot regarding catchy phrases or jingles. While I understand that the XFL is not going to incorporate a Burger King style “Whopper” jingle, there are many possibilities of song that the XFL, or specifically the Arlington Renegades, can use as team hype music. When considering the music choices that may become most recognizable, think of “Jump” at the beginning of all the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill basketball games.

The last thing that Atwood discussed was incorporating players out in the community. It is shown that when more people can recognize and resonate with people that they are rooting for, their bond as a fan becomes stronger. Atwood proposes either community service events or surprising public spectacles in order to promote time with fans, rather than holding a more transactional feeling meet-and-greet.