

Effects of Creative Advertisement on XFL Fan Engagement
Focused on Arlington Renegades' TikTok Presence

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I. Introduction

Following the XFL league's failure in its initial launching, the league relaunched in 2020 with a change in ownership, abandoning its ties to the WWE (Mahmood, 2023). After COVID-19-related setbacks, the XFL officially launches after the Super Bowl in 2023. The league's objectives are to bring a more fast-paced and fan-friendly environment to football and will also serve as a test league for rules and policies that could potentially be implemented in the NFL (About the XFL, 2023).

Measuring the strategies that the Arlington Renegades can adopt in order to generate more fan involvement will be the central aim of the research project. Within the scope of our research, we seek to identify how music, graphics and graphic design, video, and pieces of the Renegades' brand influence fan involvement and experience through the team's TikTok platform. Through focus groups and surveys, we will identify the ways that fan involvement fluctuates, identifying trends within demographics, gender identities, age ranges, and income, among other key categories. We strive to identify a connection between what it means to be a Renegades Fan and the connection to Texan culture.

"Deep in the heart of Texas, beats a different kind of pulse. A spirit untamed. A swagger that can't be denied. Where big meets bold meets badass. This is outlaw country, inside the lines. This is hell on wheels, between hash marks. This is their home on the range. The Dallas Renegades. Raising Hell."

II. Background & Overview

The birth of American football began with a college football match between Rutgers University and Princeton University in 1869. Stemming from rugby and soccer roots, it was not until the late 1800s that the combined rules began to transform into the rules of the sport Americans know and love today. 1892 saw the birth of professional football after the Allegheny Athletic Association defeated the Pittsburgh Athletic Association. (Nov 12)

Although the American Professional Football Association, now known as the NFL (National Football League), was formed in 1920, American football did not begin to surge in popularity until 1966, when “The Merger” formed a larger league in combination with the American Football League. (Gulizia 2019) With the consequential formation of professional teams in Houston and Dallas, football culture became especially prominent within the state of Texas. (Cherry 2022)

Being the second-largest state in the United States, both by area and population, the state of Texas is commonly associated with the phrase, “Everything’s bigger in Texas,” and that includes its football culture. (Popik 2006) Football in Texas brings together communities and people of all ages.

The XFL, initially founded in 2001, was created to allow football fans to continue enjoying the spectacle after the NFL season ended. The league initially failed due to its reliance on professional wrestling gimmicks, loss of funding, and low viewership. (Solomon 2017) With its relocation from Delaware to Arlington, Texas, the XFL and the Arlington Renegades now have an opportunity to capitalize on this “Everything’s Bigger in Texas” idea.

III. Issues

NFL Dominates TikTok's US Sports Entertainment Sector

- I. Academic & Trade Literature
 - Partnership started 2019 - increase in TikTok content creation during/after Pandemic, i.e., after XFL shutdown
 - engagement strategy: “having its players and teams reach out to fans directly through comments on people’s posts and videos” (Campaign)
 - Using relevant/viral influencers to bolster brand creative
- II. Client Challenges & Opportunities
 - Cut through the noise: accentuate differences from NFL in creative content
 - e.g., rule changes, Dwayne Johnson, rehabilitation mission statement, local ‘Texas’ culture and community impact, etc.
 - Provide more ‘basic’/popular football TikToks
 - e.g., “Mic’d up,” post-game interview jokes/bloopers, recreating trendy TikTok dances/memes, etc.
- III. Client History & Progress
 - XFL official account (@xfl) has five TikToks posted since the 2023 relaunch
 - XFL official account and individual team accounts totals <5% current engagement rate (source: hypeauditor.com)
 - Low-quality production, little-to-no graphics or design

Cheerleader Controversy

- I. Academic and Trade Literature
 - First XFL season 2001- emphasis on cheerleader sex-appeal after a decline in viewership
 - Controversial commercial, cheerleaders’ sexual relationships with players, “behind-the-scenes locker room” halftime show, team media guides with detailed physical descriptions, “Who doesn't want sexy cheerleaders?”
- II. Client Challenges & Opportunities
 - Past controversy would not stand well with today’s media climate, could lead to overwhelming press overshadowing season
 - Argued that college and NFL teams do the same to their cheerleaders, could end up in the center of a national conversation
- III. Client History & Progress
 - New owners and rebrand separates past iteration from this one
 - No Cheerleaders (As of 2018 for 2020 relaunch, 2023 Season TBD)

XFL and the COVID-19 Pandemic

- I. Academic & Trade Literature
 - 2020 - After a 5-game season, the XFL suspended all operations due to the COVID-19 Pandemic

- Laid off all employees except for C-Suite
- II. Client Challenges & Opportunities
 - Widely publicized/funded media coverage - financial loss
 - Lost relevancy among pandemic-related news coverage and impact
- III. Client History & Progress
 - With no 2021 season, a thoughtful and intentional rebranding was developed
 - Teams changed logos, uniforms; Los Angeles Wildcats franchise was replaced in the league with San Antonio Brahmas,
 - Starting 2023 season with enough information to spark fan predictions, but still excited for the ‘inaugural’ season

Vince McMahon Misconduct & Legal Trouble

- I. Academic & Trade Literature
 - 1992 - Accused of sexual assault by a former WWE Referee - settled for millions of dollars (exact amount unknown)
 - 1993 - Accused of distributing steroids to wrestlers, indicted in federal court, no charges filed
 - 2006 - Accused of sexual harassment 2006 by a Florida tanning bar employee, no charges filed
 - 2022 - Total \$12million of hush-settlement paid over an alleged affairs and sexual misconduct with former WWE employees, investigated by WWE board
 - resulted in McMahon stepping down as CEO whilst staying in content development, then returning to CEO/Chairman position six months later
- II. Client Challenges & Opportunities
 - McMahon will always be connected to the XFL brand because of its conception and execution
- III. Client History & Progress
 - 2020 McMahon declares he will not buy back the XFL in bankruptcy court filings
 - Dwayne Johnson and Dany Garcia bring new celebrity faces to the brand

TikTok and Texas Politics

- I. Academic & Trade Literature
 - Texas has banned TikTok from all government employees' state-issued devices under Governor Greg Abbott
 - National attention to data collection supervised by ByteDance Ltd., TikTok’s parent company headquartered in Beijing, and its rumored connection to the Chinese Communist Party
- II. Client Challenges & Opportunities
 - TikTok in America is the fastest-growing social media platform and has catapulted creators and businesses into the public eye by use of creative advertising
 - Reaches younger audiences and audiences that would not have previously known about the league

- ‘Texas’ Pride is marketable: fostering community within Arlington area, highlight local businesses, lean into “renegade”/western landscape, etc.

III. Client History & Progress

- One @xfl video from the 2020 season had 3M views and 540k likes
 - a fan-created “beer snake,” no football/XFL-branding at all
- Brand inconsistency and low-quality production
 - No consistency: all varying themes: hype video, player highlight, meme, and two Black History Month features
- No team account/rivalry crossover content

IV. Law & Policy

Within recent years, the continuous rise in the cost of advertising can be seen to coincide with the increase in business opportunities and the prevalence of social media. The legal space surrounding advertising and spending, specifically within the media landscape, has also progressed. The protection of consumers against false and misleading advertisements has been pushed into the spotlight. However, the rapid development of social media has also provided an excellent channel for organizations to build community and branding. When considering the XFL, social media branding has shown success in bringing fan bases together and allowing for interaction among spectators.

A. First Amendment Protection of Advertisements

The development of technology has begun to move quicker and quicker in recent years, whereas legal backing and government intervention seem to keep slowing down. The media landscape has proven too large of a task for only the executive branch or Congress to undertake. The introduction of government agencies, like the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) and the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA), has been paramount to the monitoring of internet and social media activity.

Over time, the United States court has granted advertisers more First Amendment rights and protections. This development can be seen throughout the Supreme Court Cases of *Valentine v Christensen*, *New York Times v Sullivan*, and *Virginia State Board of Pharmacy v Virginia Citizens Consumer Council*. Beginning in 1964, the U.S. Supreme Court established that purely commercial speech is not protected by the First Amendment in *Valentine v Christensen*. Then, in 1964, SCOTUS determined in *New York Times v Sullivan* that political and editorial advertisements were protected by the First Amendment. Lastly, the court finally gave commercial speech First Amendment protection, with limitations, in *Virginia State Board of Pharmacy v Virginia Citizens Consumer Council* in 1976.

Some of these limitations have been placed with the development of new technology and the decisions in other Supreme Court Cases. In *Zauderer v Office of Disciplinary Counsel*, SCOTUS announced that the government can legally compel commercial speech and that advertisements must contain “purely factual and uncontroversial information.” Another case that set a precedent in advertising is *Central Hudson Gas & Electric Corp. v Public Service Commission*, this case introduced the Central Hudson Test. The Central Hudson Test explains that the government can regulate commercial speech under the First Amendment if there is substantial government interest that is directly advanced by the regulation and if the regulation is not broader than necessary to achieve the government’s goal.

B. Development of Short-Video Platforms

Short-video social media platforms have been around for a long time, but none have been quite as revolutionary within the business and marketing realm as TikTok. Beginning in 2013, Vine was an American platform owned by Twitter, where users could record and share six-

second-long looping videos (McLaughlin, 2013). Vine became incredibly popular, influential trends and creators began to gain followings, and advertisers began to take notice. By the end of 2015, Vine reported over 200 million regular users; however, there began to be a noticeable loss of relevance for the app (Students_Master, 2021). In 2016, Twitter officially announced that they would be deactivating the Vine app.

Within the short succession of the deactivation of Vine, another short-video platform, Musical.ly, was beginning to become popularized. Musical.ly was introduced in July 2014 by a Chinese social media company, and gained users quickly (Carson, 2016). While Vine and Musical.ly overlapped in the time that they were in use, they were drastically different apps. Vine focused on short videos with humor and quick trends, whereas Musical.ly had longer videos that focused on lip-syncing and dancing. Musical.ly was very popular for a short time, reaching over 90 million registered users by June 2016 (Jennings, 2019).

After the decline of Musical.ly, the Chinese-based company, ByteDance, released an app called Douyin. The app was quick to gain traction and success within China; ultimately being released outside of mainland China in May of 2017 (ByteDance, 2023). Quickly after TikTok's release, ByteDance acquired the successful Musical.ly app for around \$1 billion, merging the two platforms in August 2018 (Jennings, 2019).

Throughout the development of the many short-video social media platforms, TikTok has grown exponentially. As of 2023, TikTok has over 1.53 billion users, 1 billion of which are active monthly, from across 154 countries (Ruby, 2023). However, since TikTok is growing so quickly, the United States government is looking to restrict the usage of the platform amongst Americans, especially minors.

a. Musical.ly vs FTC

The Federal Trade Commission, or FTC, is a U.S. government agency designed to “enforce federal consumer protection laws that prevent fraud, deception and unfair business practices,” (FTC, 2023). The FTC is largely involved in the supervision of the internet and different social media platforms.

In 2019, the video-sharing social media platform, Musical.ly, which had then been absorbed by TikTok, agreed to pay \$5.7 million to the FTC due to a violation of the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act, or COPPA (FTC, 2019). According to the FTC, the operators of Musical.ly were illegally collecting the personal information of children that were using the app.

“The operators of Musical.ly—now known as TikTok—knew many children were using the app but they still failed to seek parental consent before collecting names, email addresses, and other personal information from users under the age of 13,” said FTC Chairman Joe Simons. “This record penalty should be a reminder to all online services and websites that target children: We take enforcement of COPPA very seriously, and we will not tolerate companies that flagrantly ignore the law.”

The FTC also made the public aware that the Musical.ly operators were knowledgeable of a significant percentage of users that were under the age of 13, which is against the app's user

guidelines. Many parents complained to Musical.ly about their children under 13 creating accounts, and the app failing to notify parents of the data collection of the minors (FTC, 2019).

As of 2019, Musical.ly's settlement of \$5.7 million is the largest monetary settlement that the FTC has obtained in a COPPA case (FTC, 2019).

b. TikTok vs FTC

The Federal Trade Commission has also investigated the advertising done on TikTok. Within the past years, the FTC has updated its guidelines and added a clause that requires influencers on social media to disclose when they receive any funding in order to promote a brand, company, or organization on their feeds (Sabin, 2019). This disclosure usually comes in the form of hashtags, #ad, or #sponsored. However, since TikTok is a short video platform, captions that disclose sponsorships tend to be less visible than on other sites like Instagram and Facebook (Sabin, 2019).

“While TikTok might be a new platform, it suffers from the same old problems that we see on other social media platforms,” [Bonnie] Patten [executive director of Truth in Advertising] said, namely the presence of influencers “who are marketing products without appropriately disclosing that they have a material connection with the company that they’re endorsing.”

C. President Trump/Congress vs TikTok

TikTok is currently under fire from the United States government. The ties with China and potential national security threats are pushing bills proposing the ban of TikTok through state and federal courts. Previously, in 2019, former president Donald Trump invoked his executive authority and declared a national emergency revolving around the “extraordinary threat” that foreign technology companies pose to American national security (Nichols, 2020). While Donald Trump’s attempted ban of TikTok and other companies similar did not follow through, it did spark doubt and concern over the practices and intent of these organizations.

The concern in TikTok as a national security threat has recently resurfaced again. Currently, TikTok is prohibited to be downloaded on federal-owned state or government devices. Many Republican governors, including in Ohio, Maryland, and South Dakota, have also issued downloading bans on government devices (Kagubare, 2023). There have also been regulations on the accessibility of TikTok within government locations, and more recently on educational properties such as public middle and high schools. More than 30 states have issued TikTok bans of varying degrees (Kagubare, 2023).

· Information Security and Data Protection

All information created, obtained, or stored by ByteDance is a valuable asset. We are responsible for not only the security of our own network and information but also the privacy and security of our global users' and all Partners' data. Likewise, Partners are expected to take responsibility to protect the privacy and security of our global users' and ByteDancers' data.

ByteDancers and Partners must maintain a high standard for the security of data in the countries in which we operate by complying with applicable data protection laws and regulations at all times.

All non-public information disclosed by ByteDance in the course of business must be treated by Partners as confidential, including but not limited to the Company's business information, intellectual property rights, product strategy, proprietary data, financial status, strategic plans, organizational structure, technical or management rules, negotiation information, user/ customer information, employee information, as well as third-party confidential information that ByteDance is under any statutory or contractual obligation not to disclose to the public. Partners must use confidential information only as authorized and only for ByteDance business.

We not only attach importance to the protection of confidential information of ourselves, but also attach equal importance to the protection of confidential information of our Partners. We respect the legitimate rights and interests of Partners and we are committed to fulfilling our obligation to protect all confidential information of our Partners in accordance with the confidentiality agreement or applicable laws and regulations.

Excerpt from ByteDance Code of Conduct

D. Texas vs TikTok

Specifically, within Texas, TikTok is not being well received by the state. Texas Gov. Greg Abbott (R) is currently proposing a plan to ban TikTok on all state government-issued devices and networks (Kagubare, 2023).

“Owned by a Chinese company that employs Chinese Communist Party members, TikTok harvests significant amounts of data from a user’s device, including details about a user’s internet activity,” [Gov. Abbott] added.

Many Texas colleges and universities have already taken initiative and banned TikTok on campus Wifi. The list of colleges includes the University of Texas at Austin, the University of Texas at Dallas, Texas A&M, Lamar University, West Texas A&M University, the University of Houston System, and the Texas Tech University System (Silva, 2023).

V. Key Voices

Vince McMahon: XFL's First Owner

- I. Mission
 - To create a professional football league with the spectacle appeal of World Wrestling Entertainment (WWE)
- II. Geographic Focus
 - Eastern Division: Birmingham, AL (Thunderbolts); Chicago, IL (Enforcers); Greater New York/New Jersey area (Hitmen); Orlando, FL (Rage).
 - Western Division: Las Vegas, NV (Outlaws); Los Angeles, CA (Xtreme); Memphis, TN (Maniax); San Francisco, CA (Demons).
- III. Target Audience
 - 2022: Median Age 28
 - Favorability (Somewhat to Very Favorable)
 - Ethnicity: White 20%, Hispanic 24%, African American 21%, Other 18%
 - Sex: Male 28%, Female 13%
 - Age: 18-29 17%, 30-44 30%, 45-54 23%, 55-64 14%, 65+ 13%
 - Predominantly Straight Men (See: Cheerleader controversies)
- IV. Strategic Messaging
 - See Cheerleader Controversies (Section III)
- V. Marketing Strategy Successes & Failures
 - Viewership ratings dropped 70% after week 1
 - 2020 Parent company filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy

United States Football League (USFL)

- I. Mission
 - A secondary professional football league
- II. Geographic Focus
 - North Division: Michigan (Panthers), New Jersey (Generals), Philadelphia (Stars), Pittsburgh (Maulers)
 - South Division: Birmingham, AL (Stallions); Houston, TX (Gamblers); New Orleans, LA (Breakers); Tampa Bay, FL (Bandits).
- III. Target Audience
 - Mainly NFL-Bound players attract NFL Spring Training / NFL Draft Audience
- IV. Strategic Messaging
 - Advertising cheap tickets, brand-new stadiums
- V. Marketing Strategy Successes & Failures
 - 2022 championship game averaged 1.25 million viewers
 - @usfl Tiktok: 287.8K Followers, 6.3M Likes

Canadian Football League (CFL)

- I. Mission
 - A professional football league based in Canada
- II. Geographic Focus
 - Teams: Hamilton, Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto, Winnipeg, Edmonton, Saskatchewan, Calgary, and British Colombia
- III. Target Audience
 - 84 Players have transferred from the XFL to CFL - 11 Former Renegades
 - Well-established CFL - NFL connection
- IV. Strategic Messaging
 - 2020 Rumored partnership and/or merge with XFL
 - Shut down by CFL, XFL announced 2023 comeback shortly after
- V. Marketing Strategy Successes & Failures
 - Attracting XFL Players with the NFL Pipeline
 - Both considered and marketed as NFL 'minor leagues'

World Wrestling Entertainment (WWE) and the XFL

- I. Mission
 - Owned by Vince McMahon at the time of XFL's conception
 - Translate WWE Fanbase/Viewership to XFL
- II. Geographic Focus
 - WWE Fanbase: Nationally and Internationally
- III. Target Audience
 - Favorability (Somewhat to Very Favorable)
 - Ethnicity: White 26%, Hispanic 38%, African American 36%, Other 31%
 - Sex: Male 33%, Female 22%
 - Age: 18-29 33%, 30-44 40%, 45-54 26%, 55-64 19%, 65+ 14%
- IV. Strategic Messaging
 - Fanfare, spectacle, performance
 - McMahon statement: XFL will not involve any politics, purely entertainment and fan experience.
 - See Cheerleader Controversy (Section III)
 - Various marketing cross-references (e.g., Randy Orton, WWE's "The Viper," and XFL team, the Tampa Bay Vipers)
- V. Marketing Strategy Successes & Failures
 - "McMahon "gifted" stock to Alpha Entertainment, a separate company owned by McMahon and that owned the XFL, to get XFL naming rights and copyrights in return" (Rivera).
 - During Pandemic- State of Florida deemed WWE an "essential business"

The NFL and the XFL

I. Mission

- Player development and rehabilitation
- Professional non-NFL exposure opportunities
- Rule differences for player safety and increased fast-paced gameplay
- “Sharing insights and practices between the XFL and NFL will do a tremendous amount of good for the game of football and support the player ecosystem overall” - Dany Garcia, XFL Co-Owner & Chairwoman (Harrison).
- “The XFL has shown us that innovation is one of its core principles. We are hopeful that this relationship will support further development and improvements in the game of football at all levels,” Troy Vincent, NFL Executive Vice President of Football Operations (Harrison).

II. Geographic Focus

- 16 of 32 NFL Teams with Former XFL Players:
 - Atlanta Falcons (3), Baltimore Ravens, Carolina Panthers (5), Cincinnati Bengals, Cleveland Browns (3), Dallas Cowboys (2), Kansas City Chiefs (2), Las Vegas Raiders, Los Angeles Chargers/Rams (3), Minnesota Vikings, New Orleans Saints, New York Giants, New York Jets, Pittsburgh Steelers (10), Seattle Seahawks, Tennessee Titans (2)
- *Note:* Two Dallas Cowboys recruits, one from Arlington Renegades, one from Houston Roughnecks
- *Note:* Former Arlington Renegades players at Los Angeles Chargers, Los Angeles Rams, Atlanta Falcons, Pittsburgh Steelers, and (aforementioned) Dallas Cowboys

III. Target Audience

- NFL Spring Training / NFL Draft Audience
- Level of interest in NFL in the United States (January 2023):
 - Ethnicity: White 35% Casual fan, 37% Avid fan; Hispanic 31% Casual fan, 43% Avid fan; Black 31% Casual fan, 45% Avid fan; Other 41% Casual fan, 27% Avid fan.
 - Sex: Male 31% Casual fan, 52% Avid fan; Female 38% Casual fan, 24% Avid fan
 - 32.6 million Twitter followers
 - 10.6 million TikTok followers
- 6.69 million viewers of the NFL 2022 Pro Bowl (down from 8.2 million in 2019 and 7.97 million in 2020, no 2021 data)

IV. Strategic Messaging

- All XFL Games will stream on ESPN, ESPN+, and other Disney affiliates.
- XFL season begins directly after Superbowl
 - Was not advertised during the Superbowl game (Source: observation)

V. Marketing Strategy Successes & Failures

- April 2022 Partnership with NFL Alumni Academy
- “Beginning in 2022, each player who graduates from The Academy that does not sign with an NFL team will be guaranteed a contract for the 2023 XFL season” (About Us - NFL Academy)

VI. Academic Literature

Follower Segments Within and Across the Social Media Networks of Major Professional Sport Organizations

The study aimed to discover which people follow professional sports organizations' social media pages and to segment these viewers into certain categories. The study's purpose was to determine how sports organizations can stand out on social media platforms to create fan engagement. The study's focus was to identify how professional sports teams' social media pages can subgroup their follower base to target specific users and engage more critically with them. The researcher included the following variables in his study to determine the nature of each subgroup: demographics (i.e., age, location, sex) and social media activity. To detect patterns within each subgroup, the researcher used cluster analysis as his research methodology. The study participants were social media followers of the sports organizations, and they were divided into subgroups based on the variables of the study (demographics and social media activity). Through his research, the study was able to find the following fan segments: location, subjects' interests, occupation, and fandom of sports leagues and teams. In addition, the study found that different subgroups interact with the teams' media differently. This study differs from preceding studies because it looks at how teams can form relationships with people of different subgroups through social media platforms (Naraine, 2023). This informs our research this semester because it shows us that a social media following cannot be seen as one, but as multiple subgroups that require different types of content to maintain fan engagement among all the different types of followers.

Fan Engagement in 15 Seconds: Athletes' Relationship Marketing

During a Pandemic via TikTok

This study, initially focused on the beginning stages of the pandemic, investigates the advantages that the short-form video-sharing social media platform, TikTok, holds within the self-branding of athletes. According to the journal, the goal was to find ways for individual athletes and teams to create novelty content that extends beyond just game highlights and interviews to attract new audiences (Su et al., 2020). Since this study was in the beginning stages of TikTok's rise to popularity within the U.S., researchers decided to take Douyin, the Chinese predecessor of TikTok, into account. During this study, researchers began a focus group of ten athletes that were active on TikTok, five based in the United States and five based in China (Su et al., 2020). These athletes were purposefully sought to cover multiple different sports, genders, locations and backgrounds to expand diversity.

Below is the table of chosen athletes:

Table 1
General Information on the Selected Athletes From TikTok and Douyin

Platform	Athlete	Handle	Gender	Sport	Followers
TikTok	Giannis Antetokounmo	@giannis_an34	Male	Basketball	960,100
	Alex Bregman	@abreg_1	Male	Baseball	352,300
	Julie Ertz and Zach Ertz	@teamertz ^a	Female and male	Soccer and football	62,600
	Laurie Hernandez	@lauriehernandez	Female	Gymnastics	514,200
	LeBron James	@bryce23james ^b	Male	Basketball	549,900
Douyin	Ruoqi Hui	@huigelivable	Female	Volleyball	478,000
	Jeremy Lin	@625721948	Male	Basketball	6,907,000
	Stephen Marbury	@Starbury	Male	Basketball	1,402,000
	Minxia Wu	@wuminxia1110	Female	Diving	763,000
	Jike Zhang	@Zhangjike999	Male	Table tennis	2,627,000

Note. Number of followers as of May 9, 2020.

^aJulie Ertz and Zach Ertz jointly manage their TikTok account named Team Ertz. ^bLeBron and Savannah James manage the TikTok account of their son Bryce; the James family collaborate on content.

This study uncovered that the athlete's increase of presence on TikTok, as well as the increase in supporter interaction, presents new opportunities to further relationships, branded

content, and to appeal to new fanbases (Su et al., 2020). It was also determined that when athletes combined content of their personal lives along with athletic performance, interviews and game highlights, their account grew quicker, and more videos had the opportunity to go viral. The researchers presented the idea that the most important aspects of the athlete's profiles were authenticity, playfulness and performance (Su et al., 2020).

Future Directions of the Researchers:

“As TikTok begins to allow shoppable video posts, teams and athletes can create a new source of revenue in the era of social distancing. With many athletes and sport entities new to TikTok and experimenting with ways to leverage this emerging social media platform, it opens up a channel for sport media and marketing researchers to verify existing theory and generate new insight.”

How TikTok Has Impacted Generation Z's Buying Behaviour and Their Relationship With Brands?

This research intends to analyze and understand the ways that TikTok is being used and how Generation Z, people born approximately between 1995 to 2010, have been impacted as consumers (Ngangom, 2020). This study looks to identify the ways that the digital age, specifically within the lens of short-form video-sharing apps, like TikTok, have on the market economy, brand attitudes and purchasing power of the new generation. Since TikTok users have grown exponentially over the past years, this study's data was collected through "semi-structured interviews" with participants between the ages of 18 to 23 (Ngangom, 2020). These interviews used projective techniques in order to "unlock participants' deep motivation and attitudes," (Ngangom, 2020). Then, once data was collected from participants, researchers used thematic coding by Braun and Clarke, which consists of a six-phase that works to reveal patterns and themes amongst the data. Since word-of-mouth is such a powerful tool in today's marketplace, the immediate access that Generation Z has to product reviews and sponsorships has emphasized their buying power. The researchers found that if a company is looking to promote products or services to a younger audience, then the allocation of money and/or resources to TikTok promotions and influencer sponsorships should be emphasized (Ngangom, 2020).

Below is an excerpt from a participant's interview:

P6: It's just again like I keep reiterating. Same thing when you see a bunch of like people that you could be friends with trying a product. This makes it seem more approachable and like, okay, it's not a waste of money because this person tried it and their views seem 1,000% more honest...

And I think with TikTok again, it's a bunch of people who bought the products themselves and are trying it instead of people just writing it online. Easier to watch a lot more palatable. And I think a little bit more trustworthy for the consumer.

Ngangom's Opinion on Findings:

“The findings and insights could offer academic researchers and practitioners to implement marketing strategies to engage with these younger consumers.”

VII. SWOT Analysis

Strength	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dwayne Johnson as an owner and face of the brand brings in various audiences - Large football fan presence in the Dallas-Fort Worth area - inaugural home opening game drew 17,000 fans (2019) - 2023 fan fest brought many fans to an open practice, many seeming to be from multiple ethnic backgrounds - Relatively large social media following on all platforms (Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, Tik Tok) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - upon searching “XFL DEI,” the only semi-relevant result is the page for the XFL’s chief legal & business officer, which briefly mentions that she served on the DEI Council for the NBC Sports Women's Network - In 2021, the median household income of Arlington households was \$65,481 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This is less than the US average of above \$70K - Social media content is duplicated across the different platforms; Tik Tok content is not updated
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The largest Arlington racial/ethnic groups are White (37.6%) followed by Hispanic (29.9%) and Black (22.4%) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Very diverse demographics in Arlington. Compare to almost 60% non-white Hispanic people in the US as a whole - The median age for Arlington residents is 33.1 years young - Texas has a strong culture that can be integrated into the branding and promotional content to build stronger fan connections. This opportunity can be exploited through the team’s media platforms - Arlington is “The American Dream City,” how can we connect that to the branding of the Renegades? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How will the Arlington Renegades stand out in comparison to the two other Texas XFL teams? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How can the Renegades stand out on social media? - Will the dominant presence of the Cowboys threaten or uplift the Renegades (could be an opportunity or threat)? - Will people lose interest in minor league football once other sports in the Dallas/Ft Worth area are in season?

VIII. Research Questions & Hypothesis

As our group has been conducting secondary research, we have noticed the importance of branding within the XFL's social media presence. The colors, uniforms, graphics and music all combine to create a unified fanbase and significant attachment to the different teams. In the case of the Arlington Renegades, we believe that the incorporation of all aspects within their TikTok profile will accentuate their prominence amongst XFL teams, as well as building a new and diverse fanbase. In order to accomplish these goals, we must consider these following research questions:

1. How can the Arlington Renegades incorporate music, graphics and graphic design, and video to build a consistent brand across all their media platforms?
2. What strategies can the Arlington Renegades adopt into their TikTok platform generate more fan involvement?
3. How can the social media strategies that the Arlington Renegades adopt be molded around target demographics and age groups?

If the Arlington Renegades can create a relationship between what it means to be a Renegades' fan and the connection to Texan culture through their branding and social media presence, they will develop a larger and more devoted following quicker.

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