

January 2004

Youth Soccer Tournament Marketing Series

***Managing Youth Tournaments:
Scoring With Advertising***

A Summary of
Findings and
Recommendations
For Youth Soccer
Tournament
Directors



Published by:
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www.tourneycentral.com

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Overview

With revenues expected to rise by no more than 2 percent annually from now until 2010, the US food service industry is starved for growth¹. What does that mean to youth soccer Tournament Directors? It means that restaurants are looking for new ways to attract customers. By proposing and creating a mutually beneficial relationship with potential advertisers, the results are increased revenue for the tournament and increased revenue for the advertiser.

Whether the advertiser is a restaurant, hotel, family entertainment center or a place of worship, Tournament Directors are now in a position to demonstrate the buying power they bring to the community. Market research has been conducted to illustrate the purchasing habits of tournament attendees; and for local advertisers, the news is good.

The Tournament's role in this relationship is to partner with advertisers to ensure success for both parties.

Key Findings

Scoring with tournament advertising means that Tournament Directors and advertisers reach their goal: to make money. The Tournament Director is responsible for running a profitable event, while advertisers are responsible for running a profitable business. It is a symbiotic relationship; advertising drives more people to your web site, which results in more teams applying for the tournament. A good tournament web site gives coaches/players/parents a reason to come back. These reasons include advertisers (hotels, restaurants, family entertainment and places of worship) with information such as hours of operation, directions, special offers and availability.

Special Offers Generate Traffic

Tournaments that utilize special offers from advertisers generate higher traffic than those that do not. In comparing two tournaments that had similar demographics, research shows a dramatic increase in web site traffic for the tournament that utilized special offers. The demographics of the tournaments included the same type of teams, the same age divisions, the same number of teams and the same ratio of travel vs. local teams. The chart below compares the number of searches for these two tournament web sites, one that did and one that did not advertise with special offers.

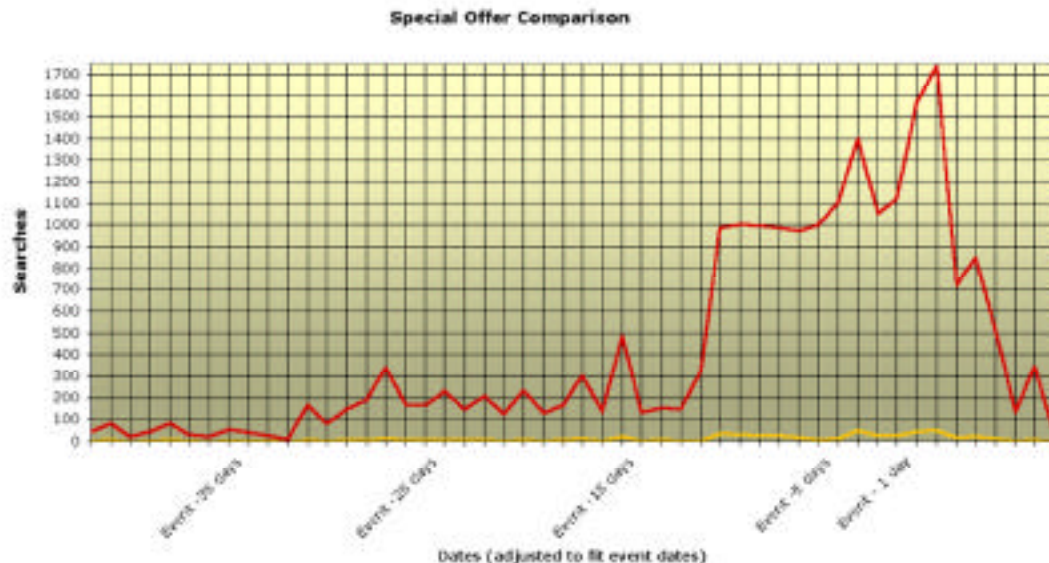


Figure 1

¹ *Fast-Food Fight*, John R. McPherson, Adrian V. Mitchell, and Mark R. Mitten, The McKinsey Quarterly, February 01, 2003

A significantly different traffic pattern emerged from the above comparison:

1. Traffic at the peaks for the tournament with special offers were 256% higher than the peaks shown for the tournament without special offers
2. Peaks were not as sharply defined by "lulls" of non-search days, i.e., traffic was highly sustained the 2 weeks prior to the tournament, and rose sharply the week previous. The more special offers present, the more visitors searched
3. 62% of searches clicked on multiple special offers
4. The tournament without special offers saw a significant number of repeat visitors' search almost daily the week prior to the tournament. However, since there were no special offers, the traffic did not sustain or grow.

The searches that are most significant and immediate are (in order):

1. Special offers
2. Hotels
3. Restaurants

The searches are more or less significant as related to the point in time of the tournament cycle. During pre-acceptance, hotel searches were seen at approximately 6 weeks out, when the number of applications started to increase. However, while the traffic peaked, it was mostly spread over a period of 2 weeks. Although there is another traffic lift when the acceptance is sent out, significant traffic was seen when the schedule was posted.

Traffic was steady for special offers the month previous and increased about a month before the event. Peak traffic followed the acceptance and again at the schedule. Hotel traffic followed the same traffic patterns. The special offers did have some sustainability during the event; however, the hotel searches drop off once the events started. The special offer searches continued, though not at the rate they did the week prior to the tournament.

Securing Advertisers

Now that Tournament Directors know when and where tournament visitors are looking for information, the next step is getting the advertiser to sign up. Simply put, getting an advertiser to participate in your tournament means demonstrating to them how the relationship will drive business in their door.

Research can show potential advertisers the impact of calculating the special offer and other searches. Below, table 1 illustrates the number of potential customers at two different tournaments; one that did not present Special Offers and one that did.

Using the statistics from Figure 1, the peak number of searches for each tournament was multiplied by the number of players on each team. That total was then multiplied by the number of potential tournament visitors per player². The number of potential tournament visitors, then, is the same number of potential customers for tournament advertisers.

² Per US Soccer, the average player represents 2.4 visitors to a tournament. The average number of players per team is 16 with tournaments who host teams over U14 (14 for teams who stop at U14).

It is important to note that there will be some statistical variance on these numbers as there are some teams who pass along the web site information prior to the event to parents and these parents are individual searches, but even at 80% of the searches being done by team managers and coaches, the number is still significant at 1,566 and 22,016.

	Without Special Offers	With Special Offers
Number of Searches at Peak	51	1720
Number of Players	16	16
Number of Event Visitors (16x2.4)	1,958	27,520
80% of Total Visitors	1,566	22,016

Table 1: Number of Searches Comparison

For example, ask the advertiser, "Would your local restaurant be happy with an additional 1,500 visitors on a weekend, some with return visits?" If their average lunch costs \$6.00 x 22,016 visitors = \$132,096 in additional revenue³.

Opportunities For Advertisers

In this increasingly competitive economy, many advertisers would welcome an idea to attract new customers. This is an opportune time for the Tournament Director to suggest innovative ideas for a partnership.

Until now, it was difficult to get advertising dollars from restaurants, as they felt they would get their fair share of the tournament visitors without paying for an advertisement. This was true as most food decisions were a matter of luck. After the game, the players would get into the car, take a random right or left turn out of the park and see what looked good. Now by advertising on-line, restaurants can have players and their families COMMITTED to them BEFORE they get to the tournament.

Restaurants could offer a "pre-booking", or even take orders and payment for food BEFORE the team even gets to town. Imagine if the restaurant put up a web page, linked from the expanded listing on the tournament web site, that took a seating reservation, menu order and credit card payment BEFORE the team came into town. There would be no waiting in a huge crowd in the lobby; no waiting for food and the team could leave when they were finished. No waiting for the check or to pay.

A restaurant could also tie in their order to a particular team and have the tournament then send out a follow up special offer for an establishment in their local town. For example: Eat at a Perkins in Evansville, IN and when you get home to Dayton, OH there is a special offer in your email for the local Dayton Perkins, that expires in 2 weeks.

For family entertainment establishments, many of the same opportunities exist, as they shared similar traffic patterns to the restaurants.

A largely untapped opportunity exists to sell advertising to places of worship. This is a growing market segment, especially the Christian, nondenominational segment.

³ This amount would be a percentage of the total, dependent upon the total number of advertisers.

Summary

There are many benefits to utilizing a tournament web site as the central place for communication. Among others, the benefits of real-time information and communication are:

- Reducing paperwork via automated registration
- Increasing the amount of data for tracking
- Reducing expenses and reliance on volunteers
- Taking control of hotels
- Receiving fewer phone calls
- Attracting more teams
- Creating additional revenue

When it comes to creating additional revenue, advertisers can be the ultimate score. Forming a partnership with advertisers creates a win/win situation not only for the tournament and the advertiser, but the community as well. The tournament's role, to partner with advertisers to ensure success for both parties, stimulates the local economy and brings notoriety for the Club.

Today, the Tournament Director can show the advertisers that if they are not on the web site in the weeks before a tournament, they are missing a lot of exposure and traffic.

About The Marketing Series

An Industry Study was commissioned by TourneryCentral to analyze data and trends provided by fourteen youth soccer tournaments over the period of 1999 to 2003. An independent marketing firm analyzed the number of teams, players, referees, coaches and (cumulative number) tournaments in order to provide the Key Findings presented in this paper.